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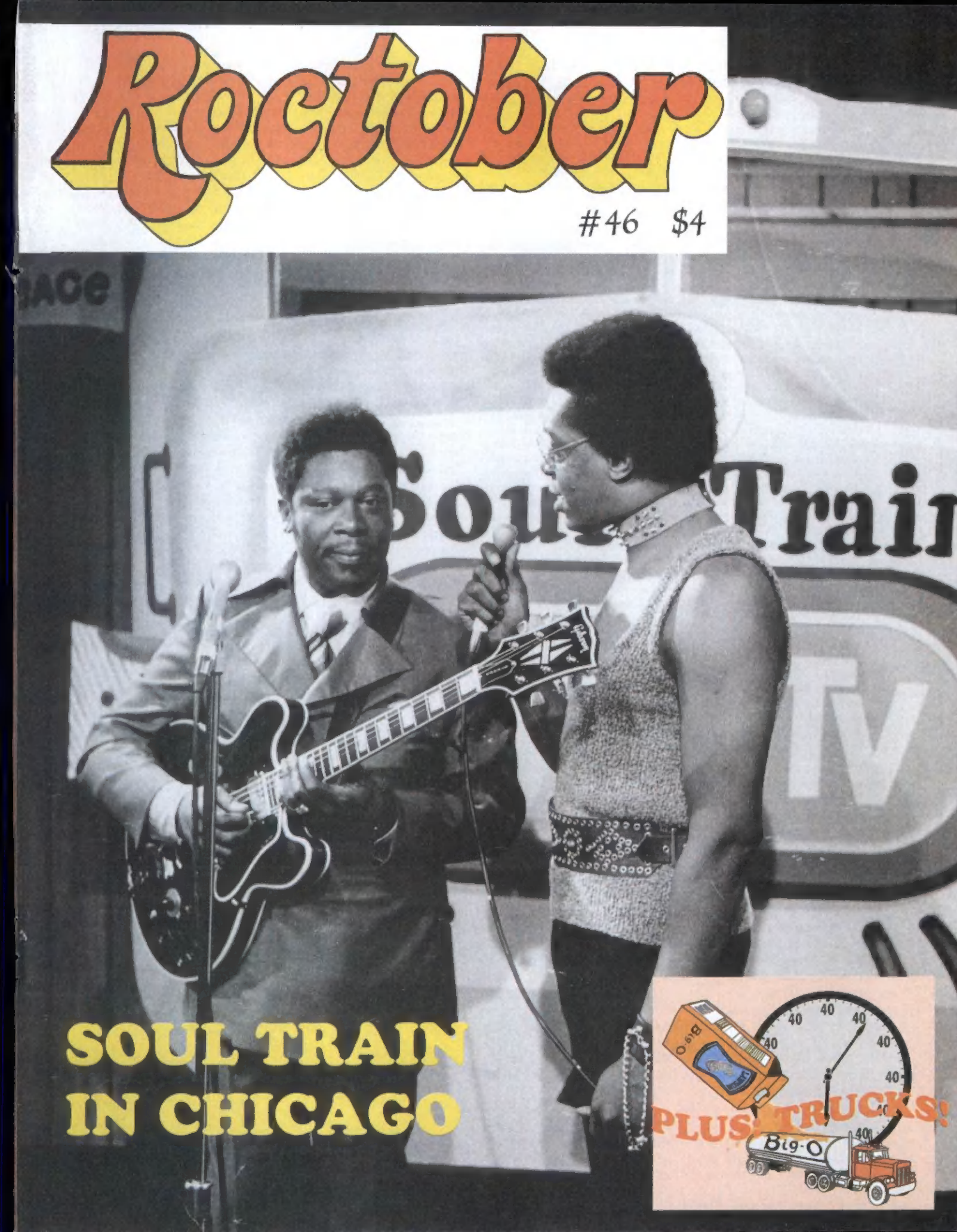

SOUL TRAIN IN CHICAGO

ROCTOBER COMICS & MUSIC #46 WINTER 2009
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Our eternal goal is to put out smaller issues more quickly, but with the genius contributors we have to this magazine, it's impossible! Yet again we have an mag several months late and well over 100 pages long...and it is AWESOME! In addition to expanding our fabulous flipbook comic, we also explore 70s Chicago Soul (including a new feature, **Sitting in the Park***) and we have one of my fave features ever, an amazing exploration of truck driving music. The centerpiece of that epic is a lengthy interview with the recently departed* ***Jerry Reed****, which brings me to my next subject. One of the downsides of doing a magazine (and a TV show, and books, and a website) that covers great, underappreciated cultural heroes from days gone by is father time sometimes takes them away from us, and this issue, though brimming with life, feels like it's half obituaries. This mainly has to do with 2008 being a year where we lost another giant every day! (And 2009 ain't starting out better - just this morning* ***Ron Asheton*** *was found dead --* Roctober's *obsessive coverage of the Stooges reunion should make our feelings about this clear). Our dearest loss in 2008 was our brilliant* Roctober *contributor* ***Patrick Welch****, best known in these pages for his stunning Michael Jackson cover of our "Kids & Rodents" issue. One of my favorite memories of spending time with him was* Roctober *related: watching him joyously draw Cynthia Plastercaster's cast of Anthony Newley's penis! Recently he'd been collaborating with Paul Nudd on illustrations so nasty that I was embarrassed to describe them to Ivan Brunetti, and that's nasty! We have presented a couple of the tamest ones on page* **125.** *Though not as personally close to us, so many of the recently departed were good friends of this magazine and our sister TV show* **Chic-A-Go-Go**. *Geniuses like* ***Nathaniel Mayer, Byron Lee*** *(of Dragonaires immortality) and* ***Forrest J. Ackerman*** *were supremely generous with their time allowing us to include them in our shenanigans and they will be missed. But two icons who left this mortal coil recently will be particularly missed around here.* ***Rudy Ray Moore*** *gave a great interview with this magazine, helped me with a book I wrote, and was the all time greatest guest on Chic-A-Go-Go. And the immortal* ***Edie Adams*** *was a woman I truly loved as a person. Of all the "Hollywood" types I've met doing the work I do she was definitely the least "Hollywood," despite the fact that her career (with and without her late husband* ***Ernie Kovacs****) made her genuine showbiz royalty. I interviewed her twice, once for* Roctober's *monkey rock issue about her exploits in the* ***Nairobe Trio*** *and once for my book* **A Friendly Game of Poker** *about Kovac's legendary card games. Both times she was a true delight, and her autobiography and LPs need to be experienced. You can probably get my book cheap to read the full-length interview, but what follows is an excerpt that gives a feel for her wonderful personality. Enjoy the magazine and see you in a few months for an on time, smaller issue. Or not. – Jake Austen/Editor*

Jake Austen: So Ernie Kovacs loved to play poker.

Edie Adams: With him it was not a choice, he just had to do it. At the time none of us were seeing shrinks, it was not psychological or obsessive-compulsive, it was just, "He has this little foible, he likes to gamble." It was funny. When he was starting out in Philadelphia he had this game with Joe Behar, our director, and anybody else that would play with him. They'd go over to our tiny, tiny apartment, eight or nine people to play cards. Not only did they not have a table, they did not have any place to sit. So Ernie took the door off the hinges, and they sat on the floor and played.

Did you ever get to play with them.

No I was not allowed near because I was considered bad luck. At the poker table or near anything in Vegas I was considered bad luck because I truly could not understand it. I would see amounts of money being lost and I would see hillsides and diamonds going down the drain, I wouldn't just see a great game. After Ernie died and I would play Vegas they said, "You never gamble!" And I would say, it's not that I have anything against it, it's paying my salary here, but I just am not a gambling person. They asked, "What if we give you money to play with?"

They wanted the gamblers to see the stars playing in the casino?

Oh yeah, so I'd go down with their money and I would deal, I'd play, I'd do anything but I couldn't understand it.

In Los Angeles Ernie would have poker games at your home.

All the time, two or three day games.

I imagine the way he understood people he'd be good at poker.

Well the way he played poker...he told me something that I have always lived by; In any negotiation where you don't have any real power, if you are the wild card that is your *only* power. They might laugh when you talk about doing something, but they know by damn you just might do it.

Do you remember any funny poker stories?

I think the funniest one was when he had some of the people over from the East. When we first came out we had an NBC tie line, a direct line between our house and NBC in New York. Herbie Susan was a good friend of ours, he did something called *Wide Wide World*, this is around '58, '59. On that show they would film things in Indonesia, or some other place that no one in American knew where it was. And one day the NBC tie line rang when Herbie and Ernie had been in a game in the den for about two or three days. They said they were looking for Herbie Susan and I said, "Isn't he in Indonesia?" They said, "Yes, we can't find him there, we were wondering if you..." I told them I'd go ask Ernie when he last saw Herbie. So I went out and there was a thing that lit up on his door that said, "Not Now." If there was a big game in progress you just couldn't go in. I knocked on the door and said "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, but I've got the NBC operator on the phone, the boss wants to speak to Herbie. I told them I thought he was in Indonesia." And they were sitting there howling, then Ernie says, "Well-l-l-l...if he is in Indonesia then *he is in Indonesia!* You tell them that you are going to try the Indonesia operator and that you'll put her on hold and be right back." So I went back inside and I said, "I think we know where he is in Indonesia." Then I was the operator getting Indonesia on the phone. I don't know what they speak in Indonesia, but I figured we were doing a sketch, so I did my best. I finally plugged them into the line in the den. So now they were in Indonesia, and none of us knew anything about the country, so everyone was making jungle calls and sound effects in the background, and there Herbie was saying he was in Indonesia. He'd say, "The rain has been awful," and they'd all make rain sounds. It was just crazy, the absolute nuttiness of it all. They had just been out there playing poker for three days.

Who else played?

One of the biggest gamblers was Phil Silvers. Also Robert Wagner...after Ernie died here comes someone to my front gate and he said "Edie, it's Robert Wagner, I have something for you." It was $10,000 he said he owed to Ernie. That was the sweetest thing I ever heard in my whole life. Then I had other people, one socialite from New York who shall remain nameless, who said Ernie owed $4500 and wanted it in cash immediately. It was so funny who rallied and who sallied.

You mentioned Phil Silvers. Was he as good a gambler as Bilko?

No! When he went to Vegas he was told by his manager that he wouldn't get paid, he would get an allowance. In those days you would get paid your entire $25,000 in cash, and then you had to walk through the entire gambling area, which for a gambler is a problem. So he would just get an allowance that he could gamble on for an hour or two, but when that was gone that was it. So he would go and if he would win he would stay out later and later and later, and one time he won *completely* and the guys with him said, "Come on, you're going to bed." He went into the room around three in the morning and he couldn't sleep, he absolutely couldn't sleep. He went back out and gambled and lost his winnings and another $5000 and he went back and he slept like a baby (laughs).

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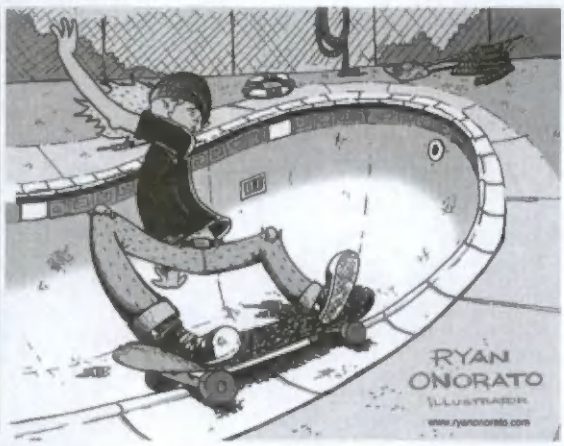

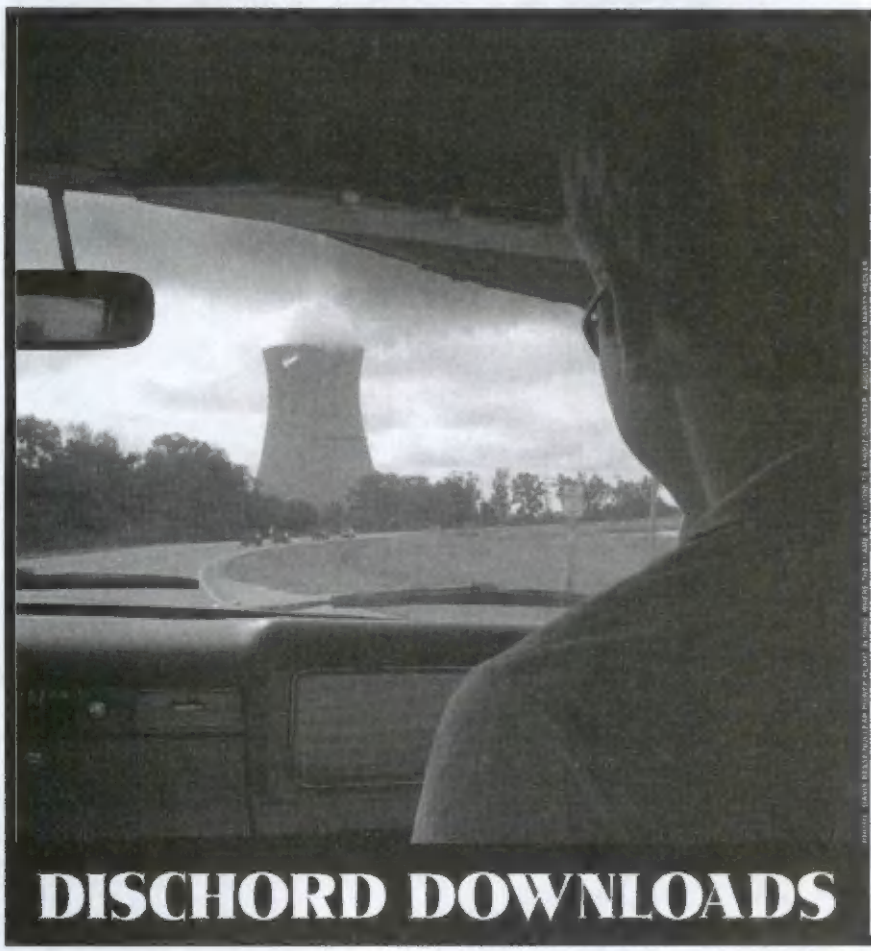

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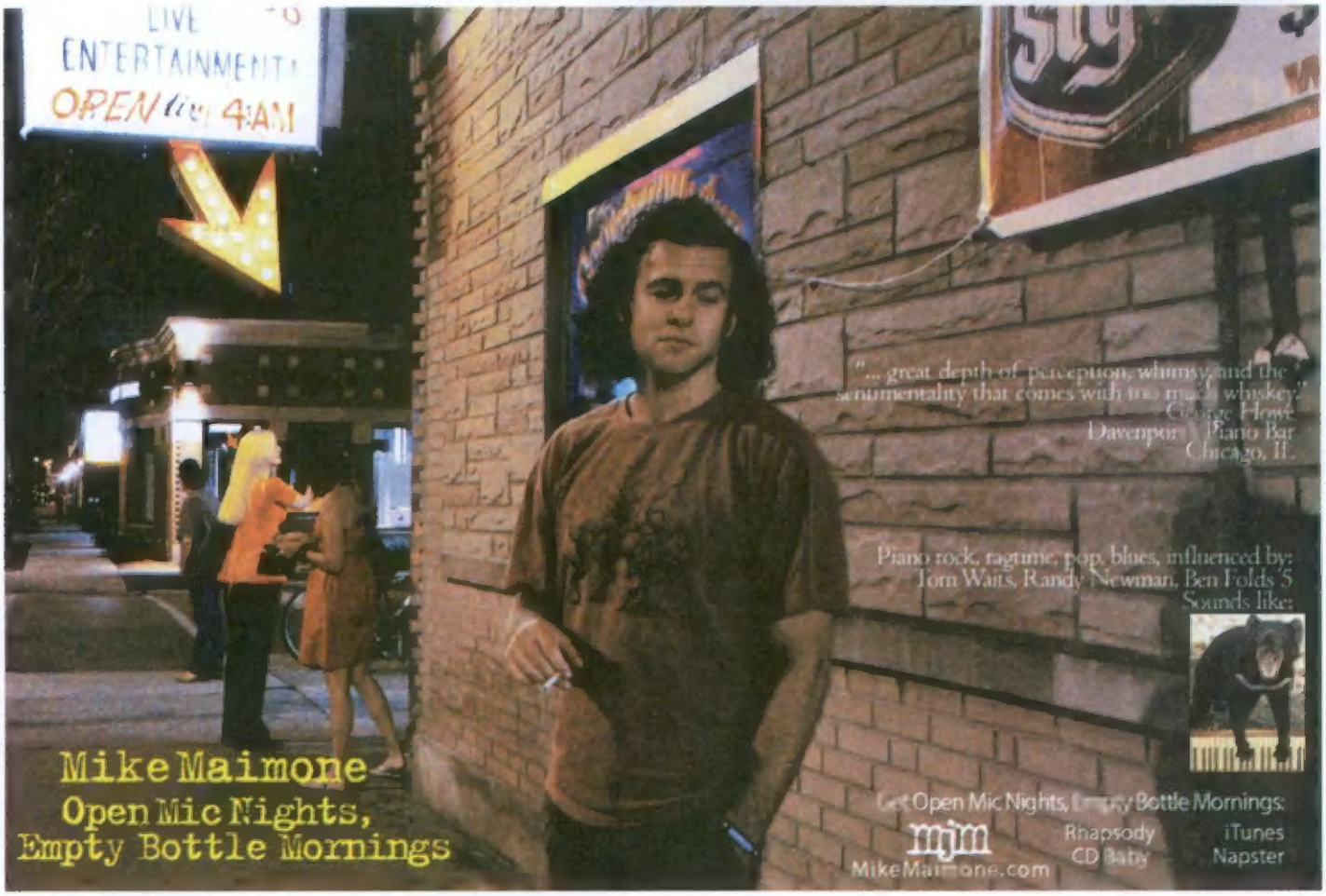
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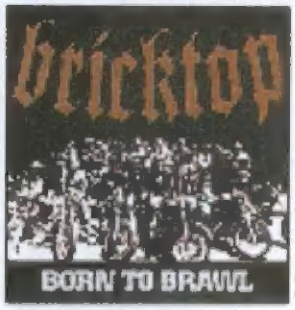

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Nardwuar the Human Serviette Vs. Flavor Flav

Nardwuar: Who are you?
Flavor Flav: I am Flavor Flav, otherwise known as Cali-Cal.
Flavor, welcome to Maple Ridge, Canada.
Thank you man, and it's an honor to be here for real.
Flavor Flav, you've been shooting *Under One Roof* here in Maple Ridge. You've been out and about on the town, haven't you?
Yes, I have a little bit, you know, you know what I'm sayin'? For as much as I could see after a 12-hour long day, you know what I mean? Ain't too much to see at night, you know what I'm sayin'? The only day I really get off is on a Sunday, you know, but the other six days, your boy is here shootin'.
But you did make it to The Standard in New Westminster, B.C. You were spotted at The Standard club in New West. Do you remember that, Flavor Flav?
The Standard Club? That's kind of familiar.
And I know, because you were spotted because when you went into the club, the DJ said, "Flavor Flav is in the house!"
Wow. Now that's standard, that's standard.
Does that always happen? Like you go into a club and the DJ announces you're in the house, like you're not afraid to let people know you're right there, you're Flavor Flav?
Hey man, listen. I get that everywhere I go, man. You know all DJs announce as soon as I walk in the house, as if they know I'm walkin' in, but if they don't know I'm walkin in, and once I'm in and they hear I'm in, then they'll shout I'm in!
Flavor Flav in the...
Hoooouse!
So Flavor Flav, you're shooting *Under One Roof* here in Vancouver. You also did some shooting in Toronto, and I wanted to ask you about a Canadian hip-hop legend. What can you tell people about the importance of Maestro Fresh Wes? *[Nardwuar pulls out a Maestro Fresh Wes LP]*
Yo! I know this guy!
You guys have given Maestro quite a bit of love over the years. You've thanked him in one of your liner notes. Maestro Fresh Wes, Canadian hip-hop at its best!
He did a show with us a looong time ago.
Yes, he did. He's a legend of Canadian hip-hop.
Waaaooow. Word up. I only met him one time, but the time that I met him, he was good.
Canadian hip-hop. Now it's interesting, Flavor Flav. You always are repping the clock. You're not reppin' the clock right now though, are you?
Well, you know the clock is upstairs, you know what I'm sayin'? And you know, Flavor Flav is gonna always represent his clock 'til the day I die. That's American Express. I don't leave home without it, you know what I'm sayin'? But what I'm trying to do right now is I'm trying to really leave Flavor Flav and the TV audience, you know what I'm sayin', 'cause I want him to sit home and watch Cali-Cal. *(The character Flav is playing in Under One Roof)*
You want them to want more, but you kind of are reppin' the clock, because the clock is out there. It's always out there. *[Nardwuar presents Flavor with a toy Flavour Flav clock]*
Waaaaaooooooow. Look at that. Look at that! Oooh!
There's Flavor Flav, and a clock.
What a handsome guy.
A Flavor Flav clock. I set it to the proper time too, right? Twelve o'clock?
That's right, 12 o'clock, point straight up, 'cause everyday I'm straight up with you. Waaoooow.
Flavor Flav, when did Chuck D take off his clock?
He took off his clock too soon.
And Flavor Flav, I was wondering, was the idea of the clock brought forth by Son Of Bazerk? *[Nardwuar pulls out a Son Of Bazerk LP]* Who is---
Waaaaaaooow, this is my man. Son Of Bazerk! What you know 'bout Son Of Berserk?
I heard Son Of Bazerk inspired you to put on the clock. Is that true, Flavor Flav?
He sure did. He's the one that got me wearin' 'em, you know what I'm sayin'? My man Son Of Bazerk, Tony Allen, T.A. the DJ, Freeport, Long Island. Yeah, he's the one that got me wearing the clocks, you know what I'm sayin'? And it started off by a joke. You know, we was playing the dozens one day, and then one day this lady came through with these shower clocks and we was wearing stop watches right, so he took the stop watch off my neck, put the clock around my neck. We was all laughin.' He said "I

dare you to wear that on stage in a show one day." So when we opened up for the Beastie Boys in Passaic, New Jersey, I put the clock on around my neck and I performed with the clock around my neck. We got the pictures back in the newspaper the next day. "Yo, the pictures was dope!" It was like, "Yo, this is gonna be the look."

All thanks to Son Of Bazerk in a way. Son Of Bazerk, props to Son Of Bazerk.

That's right. Son Of Bazerk, man. Big props to Son Of Bazerk. Son Of Bazerk is the reason why I'm here today, too.

Flavor Flav, you're shooting *Under One Roof* in Vancouver, and I'd like to ask about somebody that's not here right now, your good friend, Mr. Chuck --- *[Nardwuar hands Flav a Chuck D doll]*

Wooww ! Hold on! I never went to octopus school. Can you take one of these things*(LP and Clock)?*

Throw them down. Throw 'em down!

Naaaw, I ain't throwin' nothin' down, Holmes.

He's missing today isn't he? Chuck D is missing right?

Nah, Chuck D ain't missing. Chuck D is busy right now, you know. He's out doing his thing right now. Matter of fact he's out on a speaking engagement tour, you know. He goes to colleges, you know what I'm sayin', an' all of that.

Is Chuck a nice guy though, Flavor Flav? Because I heard once in an interview on the TV show *The Hour*, Chuck said something about giving your home phone number out to 17,000 people. Did Chuck once give out your home phone number to 17,000 people because you didn't show up to a gig?

He sure did. And you know what? I gave out his phone number, too.

We didn't hear that part of the story. What happened with all those phone calls? How many calls were there?

It wasn't 1,700 but it was about, um, half of that.

Flavor Flav, you have the song, "Fight The...

Power!"

Now, was "Fight The Power," apparently inspired by this gentleman right here, Blowfly? *[Nardwuar hands Flav a Blowfly LP]*

No. I don't think so.

Chuck D has said "Fight The Power" was directly inspired by *"Blowfly's Rapp."*

Waoow, yeah? Well, you know that's something I didn't know, but then again, see, Chuck knows best because he's the one that wrote the record. Blowfly? Sure, c'mon now, I'm a big fan of Blowfly! You know what I'm saying?

That's hip-hop's roots right there. He claimed he did a rap song in '65.

That's right. That's right

Flavor Flav, in New York growing up in the '70s, there was like 6,000 abandoned buildings. What was that like, so many abandoned buildings in New York?

Honestly, to tell you the truth, I can't really say because I never lived in one of them. Haaaaw! *[laughs]*

Did you ever check them out? Was it like a ghost town? Was New York in the 1970s like a comic book, Flavor Flav? *[Nardwuar shows Flav a Public Enemy comic]*

Waaaooow, you got everything son. Woooo! Flavor Flav and Chuck D! Waaoow, that's big. A lot of abandoned buildings in New York, you know what I'm saying, was like our big neighborhood playground, you know what I'm saying? We always played in abandoned buildings and stuff, jumping from roof to roof, you know, running in and out of each apartment, playing freeze-tag with all our friends and all of that. It was like a real big playground to us.

Have you read this comic book at all? What do you think of the representation of P.E. in this comic book? It's pretty dark, Flavor Flav.

Honestly, to tell you the truth, it's pretty dark 'til you bring it out into the light.

Baboom!

When you bring it out into the light, it ain't dark no more.

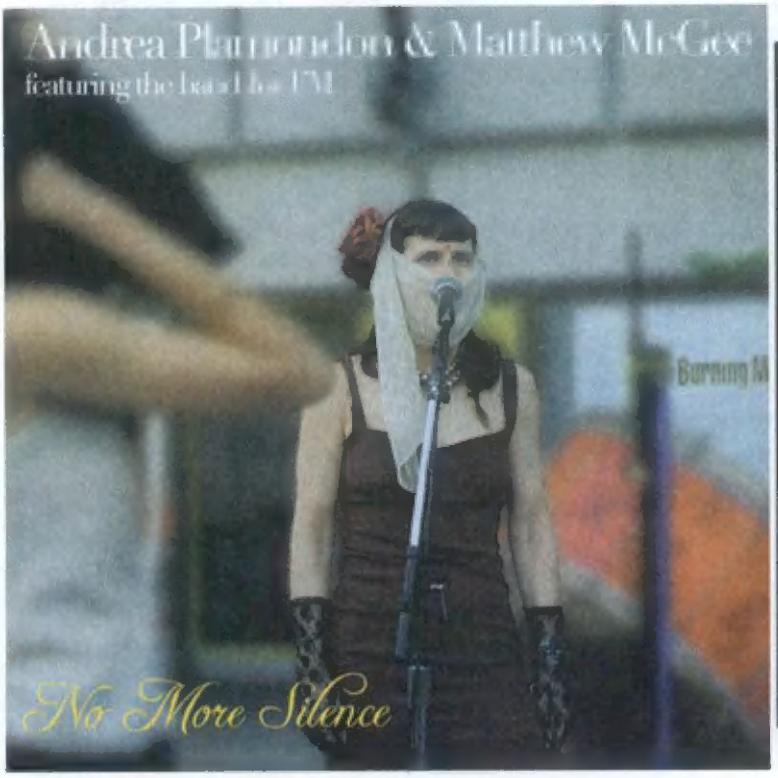
Flavor Flav, winding up here, you're shooting *Under One Roof* here in Vancouver. You're doing the acting thing.

Yes I am, and definitely it's a challenge. But it's a great experience in a different part of the ballgame from where I came from.

Flavor Flav, what's the difference between being a hype man and being an actor? In fact, what makes a good hype man? What makes a good hype man?

Good energy, you know what I'm sayin'? And not only that, but you gotta be able to have good followers, you know what I'm sayin'? If you tell people to wave they hands in the air like you just don't care, and they're waving them, then that means you got followers. But you gotta be able to produce the hype, you know what I'm saying? You gotta be hype enough to make these people do what you want them to do. That's what made me the best hype man ever, because you know I'm always hyper. I'm hyper, I'm hyper, just like you, and I got followers. I got followers, just like you, I've got much much followers.

Flavor, lastly here, I was curious, who was the OG



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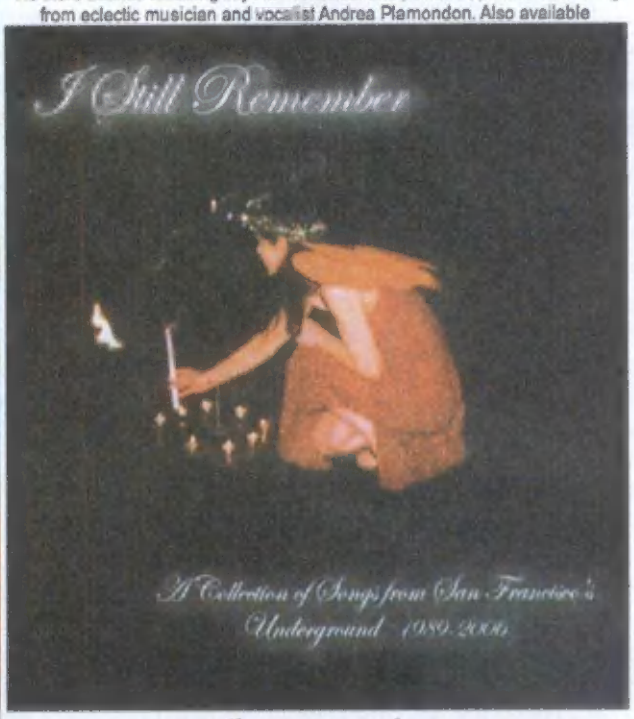

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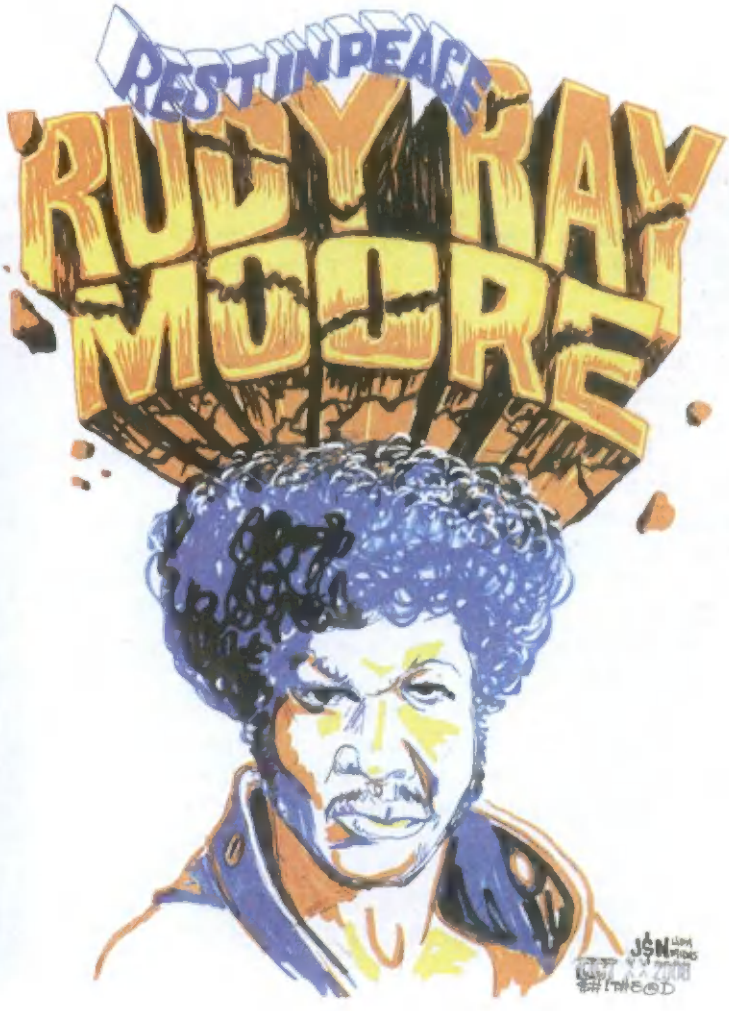
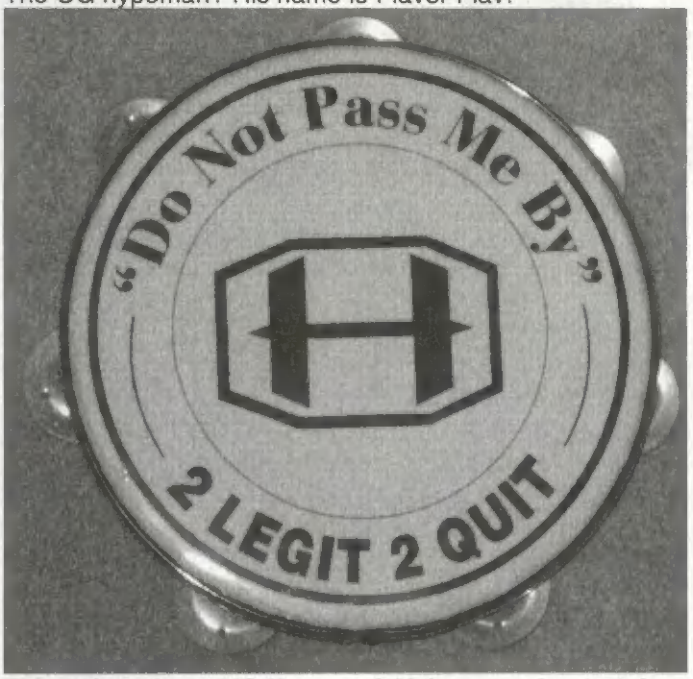


hype man? Was it 2 Bigg MC from MC Hammer? MC Hammer had 2 Bigg MC. Was he one of the OG hypemen, like hip-hop hypemen?

The OG hypeman? His name is Flavor Flav!



Flav, what about MC Hammer? He's a good entertainer isn't he?

Yeah, he's a good entertainer. Always been a good entertainer, you know what I'm sayin'? Can't touch this. Ha-ah.

I was curious, Flavor Flav. Lastly here, here we have a tambourine *[Nardwuar pulls out a tambourine]* from The Arsenio Hall Show when Hammer made one of his appearances.

[Flav reads inscription on tambourine] "Do not pass me by, too legit to quit".

Hammer put this out?

It was put out because it was an Arsenio Hall show. They handed it out to the audience and I was wondering, Flavor Flav, could you possibly, for me, Nardwuar The Human Serviette, do a little freestyle with the tambourine, Flavor Flav-style, about Maple Ridge, *Under One Roof* and getting down with the hype man? You play 13 instruments. Is the 14th the tambourine?

Waaaooow, you for real?

Yes I am, Flavor Flav. I've asked other rappers like Paul Wall and Biz Markie to do a little freestyle, but nobody's into it. But you are the master and you play all these different instruments, don't you Flav?

Wow, I play 'em all. We can have a ball, y'all. Flavor Flav, here at Maple Ridge.

Maple Ridge or Vancouver, *Under One Roof* or Nardwuar The Human Serviette.

You know what, that's another reason why I took on this job. You know why? Because I got a bad case of CRS. You know what CRS is

No I don't, Flavor Flav.

Can't remember stuff!

Baboom! How about Nardwuar, Vancouver, *Under One Roof*?

Nardwuar. Vancouver. Under One Roof. Wowwww! *[freestyles with tambourine]* I'm Flavor Flav, in the place to be, I went to St. John's University. *[stops]* Psych, I never went to college, but I still got knowledge. *[Flav starts again]* Alright, check it out. I'm Flavor Flav and I'm in Vancouver, don't ya know, pullin' a fly maneuver. That's right y'all, and I got the proof, that's why I'm filmin' *Under One Roof*. Yeah!

Thanks so much Flavor Flav. Why should people care about *Under One Roof* and Flavor Flav?

Hey, can I tell you something? I was never good at freestylin', anyway. Y'all could tell by that beat. Ha-Ha-Ha. *[laughs]*

Are you kidding? 911 is a joke. You're amazing!

And if they don't believe 911 is a joke, go out there. Get hit by a car and see how long it take them to come.

Flavor Flav, why should people care about *Under One Roof*?

The reason why I say they should care about it is because, first of all, the #1 leading hype man is on that show, you know what I'm sayin'? I always been peoples' favorite. But that's because people has always been my favourite. But then again too, it's a funny show, has a different sitcom twist, but it has that *Fresh Prince Of Bel-Air* feel.

Well, thanks very much Flavor Flav. Keep on rockin' in the free world and doot doola doot doo...

Doot doo.

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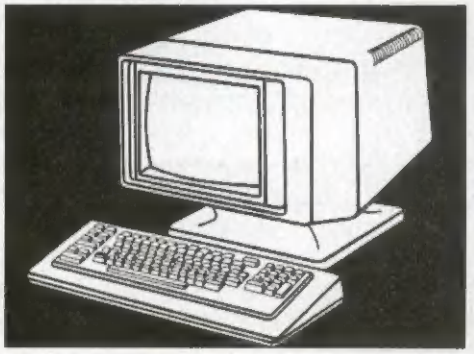

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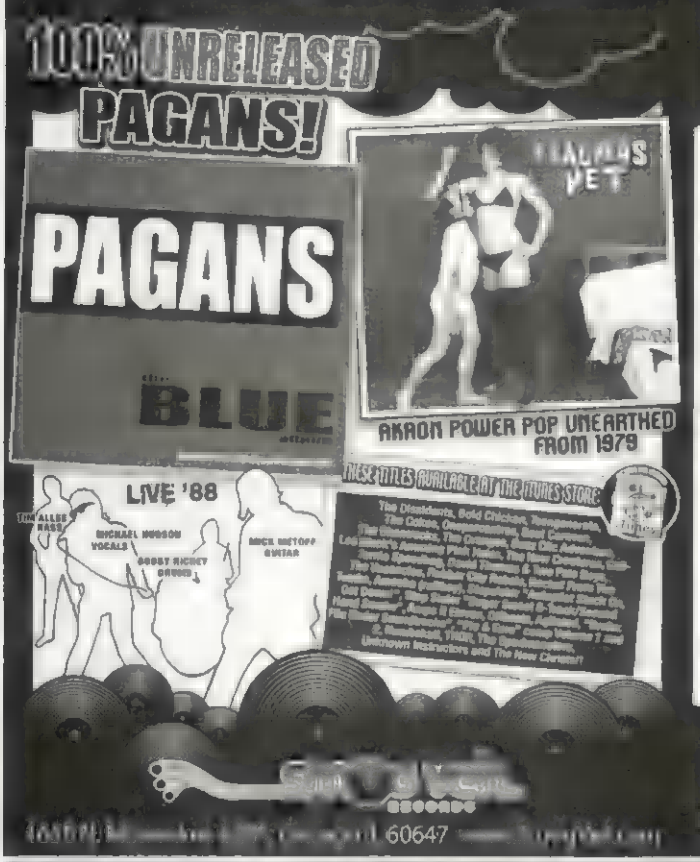

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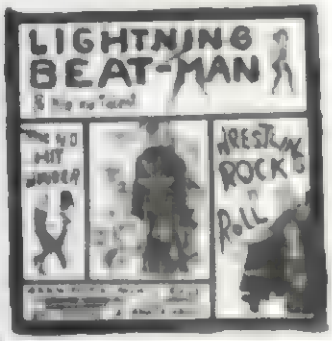

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IN CHICAGO

By Jake Austen

(Earlier this year the **Chicago Reader** *ran a version of this story, lavishly illustrated, and professionally edited. Though this version is longer, fans of concise, sensible editing are urged to visit* ***www.chicagoreader.com*** *-- which also archives* Roctober *cartoonist Plastic Crimewave's Secret History of Chicago Music comics)*

When Chris Lehman began researching his latest book he set out to pay tribute to his favorite TV dance show, to shine light upon a neglected chapter of cultural history, and, more significantly, to repay a debt. Growing up in Edmond, Oklahoma in the seventies Lehman was the only African American in his classes (his was the second black family in town, following the first by months). Watching *Soul Train* on Saturday afternoons was his only window into the music, fashions, and dances his relatives around the country took for granted.

What he did not set out to do was to write an obituary. But on April 18th, the same week Lehman's *A Critical History of Soul Train on Television* (McFarland) was released, Reuters reported *Soul Train* founder Don Cornelius' first public declaration that the show had ceased production. Cornelius had not presented a new episode in two years, instead broadcasting *Best of Soul Train* reruns, and many fans and dancers assumed the curtain had descended. But the fiercely independent mogul, notoriously frugal with interviews, had been markedly mum on the subject.

Cornelius' silence, and the resultant lack of information about the show, fed Lehman's desire to uncover the story of *Soul Train*. He knew where that story started; Cornelius was a Chicago broadcaster who launched the show on local television in 1970 before moving production to Los Angeles in 1971. But the author was surprised by what he found in the Windy City.

"All I knew about the local *Soul Train* was that it started a year before the national show." Lehman recalls. "I had the idea that when it moved to Los Angeles the Chicago show stopped. As I discovered, that's not the case at all."

Unless you were a black teenager in Chicago in the seventies with enough spare tin foil to augment your TV antenna, you may also be unaware of *Soul Train's* long ride on Midwestern tracks. From August 17 1970 to June 11 1976 the show ran every weekday after school on channel 26. Reruns continued airing every Friday until July 27 1979. Though it would be fair to say that this local television milestone is unknown, forgotten, or misremembered by most Chicagoans, it is also fair to say that for over 1,000 episodes Chicago's African American youth proudly turned to local *Soul Train* to see top R&B musicians, leading black political figures, and most importantly, themselves.

Soul Train was not the first dance show on Chicago television, or even the first with black music. In the 1950s DJ Jim Lounsbury hosted *Bandstand Matinee*, one of TV's first dance shows (following the success of Philadelphia's *Bandstand*, which became *American Bandstand*). Lounsbury (who was Caucasian) also hosted *Record Hop* in the 1960s, which gave airtime to Chicago's greatest black musicians. Other local dance shows included *Swingin' Majority*, *Time for Teens* and *Spin Time*, but the two most idiosyncratic programs, the ones which directly paved the way for *Soul Train*, were WCIU's *Kiddie-A-Go-Go* and *Red Hot and Blues*. *Kiddie-A-Go-Go* (which unlike most high school-centric dance shows featured pre-teen dancers) started in 1965 and ended only months before *Soul Train* debuted. In 1967 WCIU debuted *Red, Hot and Blues*, another dance show for adolescents, hosted by deejay Big Bill Hill, and featuring only black dancers (*Kiddie-A-Go-Go* welcomed black dancers, but because of de facto Chicago segregation, they rarely attended). Despite the excitement of seeing black music on television, as local *Soul Train* dancer Crescendo Ward recalls in Lehman's book, *Red, Hot and Blues* was far from the hippest trip in town: "No one really cool was on his show."

(It may be appropriate here for me to make the first of many disclosures: I am far from unbiased about this subject matter, as the WCIU dance shows profoundly influenced my life. Though my age ranged from unborn to nine during their airdates, and my memories of local Soul Train *are as hazy as my family's 1970's UHF reception, hearing stories about these shows, gathering information, and meeting the producers inspired me to create a cable access dance show with my wife in 1996 [*Chic-A-Go-Go*] and to write a book about the history of pop music on television [*TV-A-Go-Go, *Chicago Review Press, 2005]. In addition, I have a cousin that danced on both* Kiddie-A-Go-Go *and local* Soul Train, *and my mother-in-law tells me that she and my then-toddler wife watched local* Soul Train *every day.)*

Like many students of TV history Lehman was well aware of the *Soul Train* story. Don Cornelius was born in Chicago in 1936, raised in Bronzeville, and educated in the rich artistic environment of the DuSable high school arts programs that produced Nat King Cole, Von Freeman and Redd Foxx. The aspiring cartoonist became a marine after high school, and spent his twenties trying his hand at numerous jobs, including insurance salesman and cop. After receiving encouragement from customers (and as legend tells it from drivers he ticketed as a policeman) impressed by his rich baritone Cornelius took a broadcasting course and soon found himself an auxiliary member of the legendary Good Guys, the influential black deejays who made Leonard Chess' WVON (Voice of the Negro) radio station so popular in the sixties. He read the news, pinch-hit for sick deejays, and began reading the sports on WCIU's *A Black's View of the News* TV program. In 1969, with only three years of broadcasting under his belt, the ambitious Cornelius decided to launch his own television show. His experience in sales helped

Above: Staple Singers

him line up Sears as a sponsor and his WVON connections enabled him to book Chicago's biggest R&B stars, including Jerry Butler, the Chi-Lites, and the Emotions, for the premiere show in summer 1970. *Soul Train* became a local hit, and the ambitious Cornelius headed to Los Angeles where in 1971 he launched the syndicated national version, fully-owned by his production company. The show debuted at the heart of a magnificent era of black music and fashion, and it quickly challenged its venerable Saturday morning colleague, *American Bandstand* for popularity. The show continued to be hot through the eighties, with Cornelius, always dapper and deadly serious, as host. The mogul stepped away from the microphone in 1993, initially giving way to a rotation of B-list black stars (including future A-listers Jamie Foxx and Tyra Banks) as guest hosts, followed by several long-term hosts, most notably Emmy-winning soap star Shemar Moore. Off camera, however, Cornelius was usually on set, writing, producing and overseeing every episode. Cornelius also expanded his media empire in 1987 by launching the annual high-profile *Soul Train Awards*. Fiercely proud to be a black-owned and operated business, and suspicious of outsiders, Cornelius thrived independently for decades by providing exposure for African American artists unavailable for them on mainstream television. But after MTV was surprised by the success of *Yo! MTV Raps* in 1988, black artists found themselves more welcome on cable and network TV, and when Robert Johnson sold his BET (Black Entertainment Television) cable network (notorious for its unambitious programming) to Viacom in 2000, *Soul Train* went head-to-head with a behemoth. In 2003 the spectacular *BET Awards* debuted, the big budget extravaganza outshining the *Soul Train Awards*, leading to Cornelius receiving snubs from stars (one year he produced a low-key show in the *Soul Train* studio and he canceled 2008's show). The weekly program also found itself struggling to book big names, and fans seemed more excited than upset in 2006 when new episodes were replaced with reruns from the 1970s and 1980s.

But when Lehman began researching his book he not only found out that the Chicago show continued to run parallel to the national show for years, but also that its participants were far more anxious to discuss their experiences. Reaching out via ■ mail to Don Cornelius Productions, numerous L.A. dancers, and stars that appeared on the syndicated show he was met with silence and reluctance (Don Cornelius also did not honor interview requests for this article). On the other hand, Chicago-based performers, both prominent (the Dells, Chi-Lites) and obscure (The Mandells) shared their stories, and numerous Chicago dancers were anxious to reminisce. "There is a lot of pride amongst the people I interviewed about being part of that show," Lehman discovered. "I got the sense that they wanted to have someone talk about it because ever since the national show came on the Chicago show has been ignored." Lehman responded by devoting almost fifty pages of his book to *Soul Train* in Chicago. *(Another disclosure: Because the author used* TV-A-Go-Go *as a source I am cited in the book's bibliography, and because I answered an email directing the author towards a Yahoo group made up of ex-Soul Train dancers I am thanked in the acknowledgements. Prior to writing this article I had never spoken to nor met Mr. Lehman)*

Compared to the well-known Los Angeles version, Chicago's *Soul Train* was low rent, bordering on shoddy. Though revered for its bold programming, WCIU was always ■ frugal operation. The UHF station (Chicago's first) began broadcasting in 1964 attracting niche ethnic audiences by airing Mexican bullfights, *Amos and Andy* reruns, and talk shows in Polish, Greek and Lithuanian. Founded by John (father of sportscaster Tim) Weigel in 1964, the station was taken over by the Shapiro family in 1965. Howard Shapiro, who still oversees operations, recalls that though the diverse programming could be considered a social mission of sorts, it really was good business to attract ethnic minorities; "The two things sort of went hand in hand, but what really prompted us was that there was a variety of small markets that nobody was serving." These shows were produced mostly live in a cramped studio on the 43rd floor of the Board of Trade building on Jackson. Though the studio measured approximately 30' by 40', some of that was used for storage, and virtually everyone who describes the space compares it (unfavorably) to whatever domestic or office room they are in at the time. The studio lobby was the size of a large closet, and the dressing room actually was a closet. Shows were shot with one or two cameras, and as Bruce Ballard, who helped run the station in its early days, recalls in the book *The Golden Age of Chicago Children's Television* (Lake Claremont), the inexperienced crew included a cock-eyed cameraman who was physically unable to use the viewfinder. What people remember most about WCIU is that it remained in black and white for the duration of the 1970s. Long after other stations broadcast exclusively in color, *Soul Train* dancers were doing their best not to resemble a rerun of *The Honeymooners*.

Early episodes of *Soul Train* followed the basic dance program formula, where host Cornelius would introduce recordings of hits and the ten to fifteen couples crammed into the studio would dance. The hour program also featured musical guests who would lip sync in front of a low relief sculpture of an oncoming train. "It looked good on TV," laughs Nate Pendleton, who performed on the show in 1971 with his vocal group, the Dontells, "but up close it looked like cardboard propped up by two-by-fours." And while Cornelius' sharp suits became his signature when the show went national, it is notable that in early publicity photos the host was far bolder

The Dontells

in his attire despite being in his mid-thirties, he wears a low-cut tank top accented by chains, studs, and leather.

While Lehman was successful in reaching out to many Chicago *Train* riders, he was unable to find one of the key figures in the *Soul Train* story. Though he remained behind the scenes initially, Cornelius' right hand man in Chicago was choreographer Clinton Ghent, who coordinated the dancers, and became the host after Cornelius left for Los Angeles. Though he was a ubiquitous figure in Chicago in the 1970s, appearing on TV every weekday, emceeing concerts, and dancing nightly at Southside nightclubs, Lehman was unable to find anyone who had spoken to Ghent in years. Musicians, deejays, and promoters who had been tight with Ghent offered either shrugs or false leads, and as it turned out, without his input any account of *Soul Train* in Chicago (including Lehman's and my own in *TV-A-Go-Go*) was bound to be incomplete and inaccurate. Fortunately, after several weeks of speaking to everyone from club owner (and Staple Singer) Pervis Staples to Ghent's brother Peter Pan, I was able to track down Ghent, who, though not a recluse, had become frustrated enough with the state of the entertainment business in the eighties to do his best to became invisible to people in showbiz.

As is the case with many dancers, the first thing people do in describing Ghent is to discuss his anatomy. "Short fellow, very long legs," former Good Guy Herb Kent recalls. "Very gifted, he could dance his butt off. Everybody loved him." Despite his small stature, Ghent was a standout basketball player, even as an adolescent (the age when his older brother and his brother's friend Don Cornelius would walk him to school on their way to DuSable). Clint and Don grew up in "the Valley," a section of Bronzeville bordered by 47th Street, Cottage Grove, 51st Street, and what is now King Drive (then called South Park Way), and ■ ■ teen Ghent became an All City ballplayer for nearby Tilden Tech. After turning down a scholarship to Colorado College ("there were three blacks on campus, me and two Africans, I wasn't ready for that"), he returned to Chicago, where he played in the Pro-Am league until he received a scholarship from Central State University in Ohio. Goofing around outside of ■ mambo class near the gym, the point guard caught the attention of a dance professor who encouraged Ghent to accept a scholarship for a six-month program at Julliard. He completed the course with a certificate in choreography instruction.

Returning to Chicago in 1967 Ghent began teaching dance to kids through the Park District, and became a fixture at Southside nightclubs, particularly the storied Budland on 64th and Cottage Grove. "That club," Ghent boasts, " had the baddest dancers in the city. I don't care how fine ■ lady was, how sharp, how stacked...if you did not know how to dance you were going to get no action ■ Budland." Along with two friends (including Ronnie Paul Johnson, who became a fixture on the *Soul Train* set in the early days of the show) Ghent formed a group called the Budlanders who did comedy pantomime dance routines to popular records. The dancers was soon opening for musical acts at local clubs, and after sharing the stage at the High Chaparral with the Jackson Five, Joe Jackson approached Ghent about choreographing routines for his sons. Though he initially received only $15 a song, Clinton Ghent officially found his home in show business, and over the next decade and a half he would design dance routines for the Emotions, Chi-Lites, Stairsteps, Whispers, and others, even continuing to work with the Jackson Five after they signed with Motown (by then Ghent earned $250 a routine).

In 1969, Ghent was hanging out at the Guys and Gals club on 69th and Green when he ran into Don Cornelius. "I called him Donald Duck, because he could draw cartoons," Ghent remembers, "by this time he was on the radio, he said 'Clinton Baby!' I said 'Donald Duck!' He says, 'Hey man, I'm putting together a TV show I need the best dancers, can you get them together?'"

From this meeting came the pilot of *Soul Train*, shot at WCIU where Cornelius was still working on their weekday black news broadcast (along with Cornelius, Jesse Owens was also a sportscaster on *A Blacks Views of the News*). Thanks to Ghent it was stocked with ringers. Instead of the teens that grooved on most dance shows, *Soul Train*'s pilot featured the "baddest dancers" from Budland. When Sears-Roebuck manager George O'Hare saw the sample episode that he eventually was able to convince his bosses to sponsor, he was watching a group of clubgoing adults recreate the smoky atmosphere of a Southside club.

"I'm thinking I'm through," recalls Ghent. "I done helped a friend out and that's it, but later Don calls me and says, 'Man where you been?'" Cornelius had recruited dancers, and was ready to start the show. Because Ghent had experience working with teens at the Park District he was perfect to help coordinate the dancers on the show once the daily, live episodes began in summer 1970. WCIU would provide the crew, Cornelius would be the emcee, introduce songs, and introduce guests, and Ghent would help choose music, and pick the dancers, sometimes reconfiguring couples, "if they don't look right together."

From the first episode the show was ■ local sensation. Chicago still had a healthy recording industry, with the Curtom, Mercury, and Brunswick labels, and top artists were always in town. Early guests included the Staple Singers, B.B. King, Tyrone Davis and Curtis Mayfield. Though Cornelius initially visited schools and advertised in the *Chicago Defender* to recruit dancers, almost

instantly there were lines around the block of black teens wanting to ride the *Train*. Though the most the studio could squeeze in were thirty kids, Ghent would take names of kids who didn't get in and call them for future shows. There was a ticket system of sorts, though certain dancers became ticket-free regulars. Only high school kids were allowed on the show (though the initial *Defender* call for talent mentioned that if "your age doesn't meet the requirements, we'll make an exception"), and though there was not an official dress code, there were enough eager dancers that Ghent could choose couples that met his standards. "I tried to go by if they were good looking, intelligent, had the best personalities. I wanted to put together a group that would have a sense of togetherness, feel like a family, while they were in the studio."

When dancers and musical guests would take the elevator to the 41st floor of the Board of Trade than walk up the fire escape-like staircase to the 43rd they were becoming part of a family, an influential one. Because they had self-released the record they performed on *Soul Train*, the Dontells were very aware of how dramatically sales were affected by their appearance on the show. The group knew Don Cornelius from his days as a clerk at Foremost Liquors in their neighborhood. Pendleton recalls, that record sales were not the only benefit of appearing on the show. "Manual Seale and myself were among the few black letter carriers at the Hawthorne Post Office. Someone put a sign over the clock that Nate and Manuel were going to be on the *Soul Train*, and when we came back to work five white guys were doing our routine. I thought it was hilarious!" (Seale's son Manuel Jr. is a top R&B composer, winning a Grammy for Mariah Carey's "We Belong Together")

Bridging Chicago's racial divide was only one of the effects of appearing on *Soul Train*. Dancers became neighborhood celebrities, teachers sometimes favored televised students, and one dancer, Crescendo Ward, may have had his life saved by *Soul Train*. After walking a girlfriend home to Cabrini-Green Ward was assaulted by members of the Vice Lords gang. Mid-mugging one stopped, declaring, "Yo, wait a minute, that's that *Soul Train* motherfucker!" Instead of robbing him they gave Ward busfare.

Not satisfied with a local hit, Cornelius immediately began working towards a national production. Less than a year after the show's launch the now-ex deejay was visiting Los Angeles, armed with impressive local ratings, star-packed sample episodes, and generous commitments from Johnson Products, the Chicago-based, black-owned hair care company that accurately predicted sponsoring a national *Soul Train* would double their business. After successfully setting up the operation that summer, production began, as Cornelius would fly out on Friday, shoot four episodes, and return to Chicago to host Monday's show. On October 2nd, 1971 *Soul Train* debuted in syndication.

It would be imprudent to say in a Chicago publication that L.A.'s dancers were better than their Chicago counterparts, but it is fair to say that they were different. Though Chicago's teens were adept at new dances like the Errol Flynn, the Cowboy and the Spank, their foundation was always the cool, laid back style currently known as Stepping (previous Bopping, or Walking). As early 70s episodes of syndicated *Soul Train* demonstrate, L.A. teens favored a far more dramatic style, punctuated by broad, staccato movements. This, combined with Hollywood residents being far more sophisticated in playing to the camera, created magnificent music television. Watching stars like the Jackson Five, Gladys Knight and Joe Tex framed by a grooving, moving sea of youth made the stiff dancing of *Bandstand* seem bland, and Chicago's dancers seem, appropriately, like amateurs.

Many members of L.A.'s Soul Train Gang parlayed their exposure into professional careers, and in the eighties into prominent roles in videos (Cheryl Song memorably gets kissed in "Beat It," and doused in glitter in "Superfreak"). Many legitimate dance revolutionaries debuted on syndicated *Soul Train*, including pop–lock pioneer Don Campbell (who recorded as Don "Soul Train" Campbell) and members of his crew the Lockers, including Shabba Doo (the *Breakin'* movies) and Fred Berry ("Rerun" on *What's Happening*).

The influence of these dancers made its way back to the cramped Jackson Blvd studio. Breaking up the smoothness of the steppers were crews of dancers specializing in different styles. The Kicks were masters of flamboyant Wacking (known as Punking in L.A., closely related to Vogueing). They featured Jermaine Stewart who recorded "We Don't Have to Take Our Clothes Off" in the eighties, and died of AIDS-related illness in 1997. Another crew was the Puppets, who specialized in the Campbell Lock, and even wore the clownish knickerbockers, suspenders and "pizza" hats made famous by the Lockers.

Crescendo Ward recalls standing in the block-long line outside the Board of Trade in 1974 hoping to get on the show. "There were these guys that were always passing the line. The best dancers on *Soul Train* didn't have to wait in line, and I remember thinking, 'I'm just as good as these guys...'"

Ward soon joined that Puppets crew, and a supportive Ghent frequently let them perform routines on the show. This led to the Puppets becoming the opening act for national groups. "Being on *Soul Train* got us, all underage, onto the stage of Perv's House, the hottest night club on the South Side...we opened for the Spinners, Blue Magic, the Stylistics." Emboldened by their success the group snuck backstage at a Chicago event hosted by Wolfman Jack, host of the national music show *Midnight Special* and soon moved to L.A. to become the dance troupe on that show (they also briefly became a disco vocal group, Dream Express). In the eighties Ward came in second on *Star Search* and in the 90s he appeared in several movies (including *Five Heartbeats*, a fictionalized biography of the Dells, and *CB4*). He currently produces dance festivals in California. "If it wasn't for *Soul Train* in Chicago," Ward offers, "I wouldn't be doing any of this today."

Another dancer who made the move from Chicago to L.A. was Nieci' Payne, who danced on Chicago's *Soul Train* before moving west and becoming a fixture on the national program in the eighties. "I was thirteen in 1974 when I danced in Chicago," Payne recalls, "but I told them I was 16. They had a contest, and I won some platforms from Chaka Khan's store." (At 16 she lied about her age again and won a contest to become the Commodores' "Miss Brick House.") Payne bonded with Cornelius in L.A. despite his reputation of keeping distant from the dancers. "Cheryl Song and I would go to dinner with him and the guests. He knew that unlike some of the other dancers we wouldn't use it try to further our careers."

The aspirations of the dancers were not the only difference between Chicago's and L.A.'s *Train* rides. One signature of the national show, the "Soul Train Line," was rarely done in Chicago, due to space limitations. And while both shows featured the biggest names in black music, in L.A. some guests performed live, thus earthmoving acts like James Brown, Mandrill, and Stevie Wonder created one of kind musical masterpieces captured by a full, expert camera crew. In Chicago

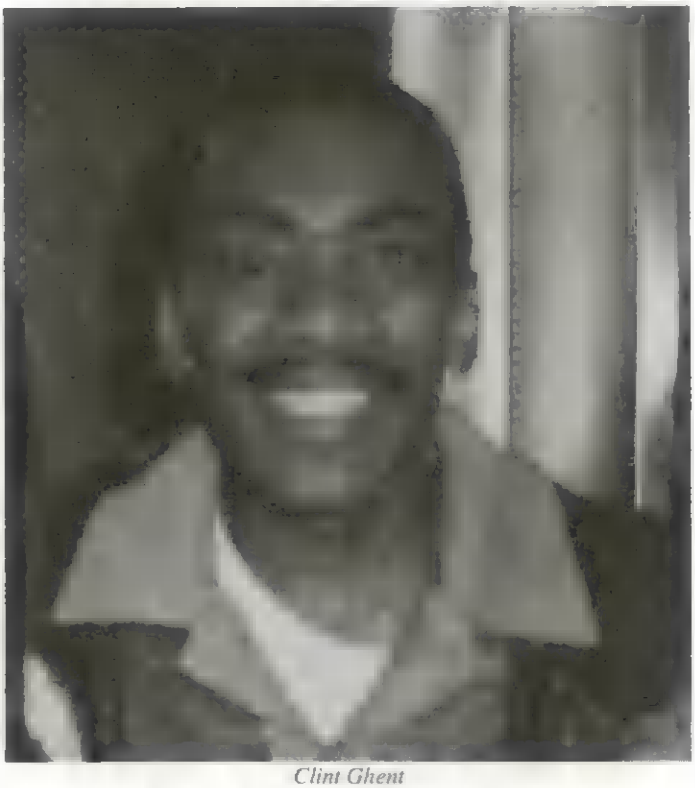
it was exciting to see acts like the O'Jays and Funkadelic on TV, but as they lipsynched in black and white to a single camera it was far from the medium meeting its potential. Because of the tiny studio big acts like Earth Wind and Fire couldn't even fit all the members. And of course, filling five hours a week necessitated booking some non-superstars, including the all-convict band the Escorts, local deejay Herb Kent (who rode circles around the dancers on a bicycle), and Alfred Fairley, the one-legged "Dancing Fanatic."

But there was another kind of guest local *Soul Train* booked that made the show stand out from its bigger, younger brother. It was not uncommon for local politicians and activists to visit. Reverend Jesse Jackson made semi-regular appearances, using the airwaves to address the younger constituents served by Operation Breadbasket, Jackson's local branch of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (and his own Operation PUSH organization after it formed in late-1971). In Lehman's book Theresa Davis of the Emotions recalls appearing on a Christmas show with Reverend Jackson where he delivered a message "stressing the importance of family unity, in the spirit of the holiday season and always."

Father George Clements of Holy Angels Catholic Church, who harbored Black Panthers wanted by the police and gained national notoriety in 1981 as the first Roman Catholic priest to adopt children, appeared many times on the show, including a 1972 appearance to discuss his church's controversial alter to St. Martin Luther King. Considering the apolitical nature of the national *Soul Train* program I asked Father Clements if it was odd for him to visit a teen dance show set, but the question took him aback. "Don and I were pretty close, and at the time there were several issues of the day that applied to young people. It wasn't considered unusual.

Another activist who appeared several times on the show was current Congressman Bobby Rush, then a member of the Illinois Black Panther Party (he took asylum at Clements' church). "The early years of *Soul Train* represent a time when we could effectively blend entertainment and activism," the Congressman recalls. Rush, who also proudly notes his appearances on *Record Hop* and *Red, Hot and Blues*, adds, "that type of programming was important for young organizers like me who needed media outlets to command public attention and inform the people in our community about police brutality, health care, education and economic issues."

After syndicated success made Cornelius a national figure he began dabbling in acting and devoted his time to his burgeoning empire. Often guest hosts filled in for him in Chicago, including deejay La Donna Tittle *(Lehman reports in his book that Big Bill Hill guest hosted, but a former WCIU engineer I spoke with says this is highly unlikely; Red, Hot & Blue was held in low regard by many in the black community, as it seemed inappropriate for the pre-teen dancers to be on a live show very late at night; towards the end of each broadcast Hill reportedly would announce on air that the parents should leave the bars and come get their kids. He also supposedly was reprimanded for assuring viewers that his sponsor's business was open and operating out of the back alley in the wake of rioting after Dr. King's assassination).* Cornelius convinced a reluctant Clinton Ghent to become an occasional guest host, and in 1973 Cornelius handed the show over to Ghent, devoting all his energy to West Coast operations. "I didn't have ambitions to be on TV," Ghent states. But he was, and under his stewardship local *Soul Train* became



Clint Ghent

its own show. Though he modeled his hosting persona after his mentor's smoothness, Cornelius was so cool that he appeared distant from the dancers and sometimes stiff. Ghent danced with the kids, warmly interacting with them. "He was approachable," Crescendo Ward recalls. "Don wasn't that approachable, but Ghent was like an older brother." Ghent was also protective of the kids. His work with the park districts instilled in him a sense of responsibility to showcase the best of Chicago youth. Though at times this required heroic measures (once protecting an underage dancer from a predatory guest) this was mostly done simply by encouraging through example. Every day he would allow two hours for his fifteen-minute commute so that he could sign autographs, engage fans, and interact with dancers.

But Ghent was not the businessman Don Cornelius was, nor was he completely devoted to showbiz. Though the show, with Sears and Coca-Cola sponsorships, was a moneymaker for WCIU and Cornelius (and Ghent, who received a $350 weekly salary from the station and 15% of ad sales), without Cornelius it was not particularly ambitious. After the L.A. show launched it does not seem that Ghent took publicity stills, or sent out press releases. Virtually every *Chicago Defender* mention of *Soul Train* concerned the L.A. production. In addition, Ghent's first love was still sports; he would practice with his softball team before the show, play games after, and when his amateur league basketball games conflicted with the show he would put on reruns. But the program, despite a curious adjustment to 45-minutes, from 4:15 to 5pm, was still popular in 1976 when Ghent received a 3am phone call from a desperate Cornelius. "He said, 'These people out here don't know where I'm coming from.'" Ghent recalls. Needing a Chicago ally he could trust, Cornelius flew Ghent out to Los Angeles to work on national *Soul Train*, effectively ending Chicago's *Train* ride. Though WCIU ran reruns until 1979, an era ended in the Bicentennial Spring.

Like Cornelius, Ghent found Angelenos harder to trust than Chicagoans. He was especially struck by the differences in the dancers. "In L.A. they were professionals, in Chicago we'd take

anybody that comes. Once those dancers out there hit TV they thought they were great, I didn't like their attitudes. Here they were happy to be on, politely asking if they could come back. And as long as they conducted themselves they could. It was great to be surrounded by close-to-home type people."

Ghent stayed in Los Angeles for eight years, which was enough to sour him on show business. After he returned home he briefly worked for the Post Office, and devoted himself to athletics, playing when he could, and becoming a certified softball umpire and basketball referee. Today Ghent, at 62 his athletic frame identical to the one that wore slick vines on *Soul Train*, officiates several games a week for industrial leagues and Chicago Public Schools.

There have been several subsequent attempts at local black dance shows. Eddie Thomas (of Curtom) shot a failed pilot called *Dance Chicago Dance*. Herb Kent briefly hosted a Stepping show on ABC in the late-nineties. And there have been several black dance shows on CAN-TV, Chicago's cable access, including *Attack of the Boogie* and *Elma & Company*. Though access shows seem far removed from *Soul Train*, La Donna Tittle, a CAN-TV producer who guest-hosted *Soul Train*, finds them comparable. "It's the same thing, lights, camera, action. The biggest difference is that at WCIU the studio was half the size of the studio at CAN-TV." Nonetheless, considering that contemporary local production these days is mostly limited to access, news, sports and WCIU's Svengoolie horror movie show, it's a good guess that we will never see another *Soul Train*.

In regards to the publication that led me to track down Ghent, I can unequivocally declare *A Critical History of Soul Train on Television* the greatest book about *Soul Train* ever published. Unfortunately, it's the only *Soul Train* book to date. There have been at least four *American Bandstand* books, two on *Midnight Special*, and Simon and Schuster's MTV Books imprint has published numerous titles about the cable channel's shows. An official *Soul Train* book, featuring dynamic photos of seventies icons, a compendium of Cornelius' poetic introductions, and anecdotes from dancers, guests, and famous fans (Bill Clinton is a longtime devotee) would certainly be successful. Though Cornelius at one time had a Soul Train record label (releasing albums by Shalamar, featuring *Soul Train* dancers Jeffrey Daniel and Jody Watley), and a club, and has licensed the brand a handful of times (including a series of R&B CDs, a line of Barbies, and a slot machine), for the most part he has been protective of and ungenerous with the content and history of his show. Cornelius' non-response to Lehman's interview requests necessitated the author basing his book primarily on archival interviews and articles. Thus, despite its lack of didactic tone or theoretical bent, Lehman felt his only option was to present the book in a footnoted academic format.

Like modern day "bedroom" recording maestros who frugally craft elaborate albums on their laptops, Lehman seems to be a member of the 21st century cyber-intelligentsia who can elaborately research a book without leaving his desk. He has laboriously processed every mention of *Soul Train* in print (including a mindboggling tedious survey of nine years of local Chicago TV listings) mostly through academic media databases. He has viewed hours of *Soul Train* footage on Youtube (quite an accomplishment considering Don Cornelius Productions expeditious removal of copyrighted materials), and he seems to have done a healthy share of his interviews over e-mail. The results are impressive, and invaluable to fans of the show, but they end up giving too much weight to media coverage (which can be imprudent when dealing with an independent show directed towards ■ marginalized population) and he is better at putting events into cultural context and timelines than he is at painting vivid pictures. That said, some of my favorite passages involve Lehman making semantic stretches to contextualize events, comparing black Chicago as portrayed on *Soul Train* to the black Chicago of St. Clair Drake's *Black Metropolis*, or the original blackface *Amos & Andy* radio show. The week the last Chicago *Soul Train* rerun airs, Lehman astutely notes, is also the week that *Good Times*, a network sitcom about black Chicago teens, also bows out and precedes by days Steve Dahl's Comiskey Park "Disco Demolition" debacle, white Chicago's riotous reaction to black music."

The St. Claude State University professor is primarily an animation scholar (you won't read a more informed analysis of the show's dancing train cartoon) and at times he seems to be approaching the material with ■ kind of innocence one would associate with cartoons that aired on Saturday morning preceding *Soul Train*. He sees the show as ■ dancing paradise, and Lehman opts to not include the dozens of news stories in which Cornelius angrily attacks critics, rivals, and even ■ teenage blogger. And though the author does note the show's shift in the eighties away from teen couples and towards professional female dancers, Lehman refuses to be cynical, finding feminist lyrics amongst the rumpshaking and hearing groundbreaking music that drowns out any critical complaints of the show's descent into strip club dancing. It's no wonder Lehman was drawn to the Chicago version of *Soul Train*. The happy high school vibe seems far more in tune with his tastes.

One of the first questions asked by everyone interviewed for this piece is how they can see episodes of the Chicago show. While it would be inaccurate to declare that no tapes exist, it is fair to say that none are currently available. There are no episodes in the collection of Chicago's Museum of Broadcast Communications, Lehman came across none in his research, and no video collectors or Youtube posters have hinted at any clips existing. Few consumers owned VCRs in the 1970s (fewer still in *Soul Train*'s demographic, as the price did not drop below $1,000 until late in the decade). Nate Pendleton recalls having a super-8 film of the Dontells performance shot in the studio, but can't locate the reel, and amongst Chicago's home movie archivists *(one last disclosure: my wife, Jacqueline Stewart, runs the South Side Home Movie Project, currently housed at Northwestern University)* footage has yet to emerge of proud parents filming their child dancing on the TV screen

In the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, low budget local live television broadcasts often went undocumented in any manner, their ethereal existence recorded only in the memories of home viewers. Kinescoping a show (using a special process to make a 16mm film of a live broadcast by filming a television monitor) was prohibitively expensive. For shows with miniscule budgets, even the use of open reel videotape recordings was too costly, and because the only compensation many local producers received was the razor-thin remainder of sponsorship money after production costs, few were willing to add even an extra $100 dollars to the weekly budget after ¾" U-matic videotapes were introduced in the early seventies (*Soul Train's* original Sears sponsorship deal was only $100 per episode). Those that did record their shows often recorded subsequent shows over the old one to save money on tape stock. Only three episodes of WCIU's dance show *Kiddie-A-Go-Go* were preserved, and I would be shocked if episodes of *Red, Hot and Blues* survived.

But obviously Don Cornelius was far more ambitious and visionary than his peers, and knew the value of preserving at least some of the Chicago shows that were part of his legacy. He shot a pilot prior to the show going on the air, and brought sample episodes to Los Angeles when shopping for a syndication deal. Also, WCIU had tapes at some point; they re-ran episodes during the show's production run, and reruns ran weekly for over three years after that (twice weekly for awhile, ■ they briefly ran shows on Saturdays to compliment the national broadcast). But Howard Shapiro doesn't think the station has any archive copies, and one would assume that it would be unlikely that Cornelius, historically frugal about releasing footage from his highly sought national series, would have plans to allow access to episodes of an obscure local UHF production.

In fact, ■ we prepared this article for print it seemed that we were approaching an age where it would be far more difficult to see any footage of *Soul Train*. The show born in Chicago, also seemed to have its death sentence issued in the Windy City in December 2007, when Sam Zell, less than two weeks after his purchase of the *Chicago Tribune*, shuttered the Tribune Entertainment division, which had been syndicating *Soul Train* since 1985. The *Best of Soul Train* reruns continued in their weekly slots, and the show seemed to have been granted ■ reprieve when the logo for the Trifecta syndicate began appearing at the end of each week's show. But a representative of Trifecta explained to me that they were not syndicating the show, and "simply assumed the remaining barter advertising sales representation of the property from Tribune for the balance of this broadcast season." The season ended on September 20, 2008.

Despite an internet hoax claiming otherwise *(From an official looking press release, complete with graphics featuring Hughley: It's A Brand-New Season of "Soul Train" With the New Host By Comeidan and Actor D.L. Hughley During 2008-2009 broadcast season with Brand-New Episodes of "Soul Train" Which is the Guests are T-Pain, Day 26, and Ne-Yo on the Stage, And featuring the brand-new theme song "Soul Train (People All Over The World)" By The Black Eyed Peas, and which is Premieres This September 27th, 2008 at 2p.m. ET/PT on WGN Check your local listings)* for the first time since 1970 *Soul Train* was off the air. But just when things looked darkest, it seems that a valiant hero has stepped in to save the imperiled dancer bound to the train tracks.

On June 17th in a shocking development, it was reported that the fiercely independent, control clutching, stranger-wary Don Cornelius had sold his entire Soul Train franchise to ■ fledgling entertainment company called MadVision. The black-owned company (certainly an important factor) anchored by young media executives who cut their teeth at Chicago's Johnson Publishing, Quincy Jones' Vibe empire, and Sean Combs' Bad Boy Productions, promises to re-launch production of new episodes, and to fully explore the media possibilities of archival material. Hinting that DVD, video on demand, mobile and internet content are all avenues to explore, the company (which would not reveal the sale price) sounded ecstatic about their acquisition, and Cornelius sounded pleased, and relieved the deal was done, telling a reporter, "Thirty-five years is ■ long time."

Compounding the exciting news, a representative of MadVision informed me that while the original *Soul Train* pilot was not included in the deal, several episodes of the Chicago version of the show were. Of course, there are many miles of track to travel between Cornelius making this deal and production resuming or any archival footage becoming available. Over the years Cornelius has announced numerous grand schemes, many of which came to fruition, but many others that were destined to go the way of platform shoes.

For example, in the same April Reuters report in which Cornelius revealed the show had officially ceased production he boldly announced ■ 2009 *Soul Train* movie (which MadVision tells me is still in the works). The "buddy comedy" about the adventures of two male dancers would feature, Cornelius promised, "lots of music, lots of comedy...a little bit of violence," and it would be, "more than slightly sensual."

"Soul Train' has always been about sexuality," he continued, "It's almost never been about guys, and almost always about girls. It's what has kept us afloat for these three decades or so."

"In the context of all the research that I did, that statement confused me a bit," confessed Christopher Lehman, who is surprised and excited about the MadVision development, but is still shook up by Cornelius' movie announcement. "I know I watched *Soul Train* primarily for the music, and learning about how the show had been so political in its early days, and the way it promoted so many artists who had feminist content in their music...to say the show was mainly about the sex was puzzling for me to read."

Below: Tyrone Davis

Perhaps he finds it puzzling because what Lehman reacted to decades ago was not simply what he saw on the screen, but also the archeological residue of the show's creation era; the innocence, the d.i.y. spirit, the politics, and the goofiness of the great little show that launched the mighty Soul Train empire. And it's possible that MadVision's youthful spirit harkens back to those days. While ■ skeptic might point out that a barely established company (their best known production is Showtime's stand up comedy showcase *White Boys in the Hood*) faces tremendous challenges, both in wrangling difficult music rights, and facing the goliath-like competition from media conglomerates, anyone familiar with the Chicago birth of *Soul Train* knows better than to bet against the ingenuity of ambitious black entrepreneurs. Considering this, perhaps Lehman's history is less an obituary than ■ way to mark the end of an era.

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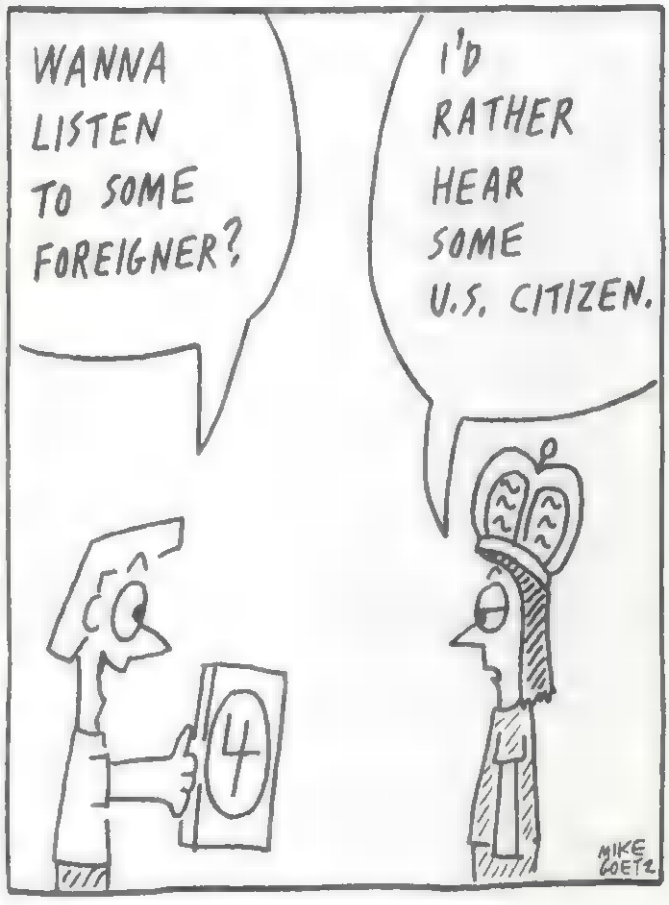

THE SOUNDS OF BLACK

By Bob Abrahamian

Transcription by lipservicetranscription.com

For fans of the sweet sounds of 60s and 70s R&B vocal groups there is no better place to be on Sunday nights than in front of your radio, or your computer at www.whpk.org, listening to Bob Abrahamian share treasures from his massive collection of rare 45s. Better still, Bob reaches out to the unsung heroes behind these unjustly obscure gems and welcomes them into the studio to tell their stories. There are over 70 of these tales generously archived on his website www.sittinginthepark.com, and Roctober Magazine is excited to share print versions of some of his most outstanding interviews in these pages. This issue we meet members of Chicago's The Sounds of Black, a/k/a The Sounds of Blackness (no relation to the long-standing Minnesota-based Gospel choral group of the same name that formed in 1971 and became nationally known in the 90s behind the voice of Chicago-area native Ann Nesby). Though they only released two singles, during their brief existence the Sounds of Blackness found themselves imbedded in an exciting moment in Chicago black culture, when R&B, funk, jazz, gospel, poetry, dance, theater, commerce and the Black Arts Movement all intertwined. From the Fall of 2006, here is Bob Abrahamian and the Sounds of Blackness:

Bob: Ok, you're tuned to WHPK 88.5 FM in Chicago. You're listening to the Sitting In The Park Show. Today I have members of the group called The Sounds Of Blackness up in here right now. So, you guys wanna introduce yourselves?

Omar Arnold: My name is Omar Arnold.

Albert Hunter: My name is Albert Hunter.

Ok. So, your group The Sounds Of Blackness recorded in the early seventies and you guys cut a couple of records so we'll talk about that. But Al, you originally sang with some other groups before that, too, right? You sang with The Blenders, their biggest hit was "Daughter," right?

Albert Hunter: Yeah, The Blenders.

You sang with some fifties groups before The Blenders?

Albert Hunter: Yeah. Quite a few of them. I sung with the Chances, The Five Chances, I did a lot of singing in the studio with those cats. Another group called The Nobles... *(The Nobles, who cut a record, were fronted by Sollie McElroy who was also in the Flamingos, Morrocos, and an early version of the Chi-Lites)*

(Below: Sounds of Black: L-R A. Hunter, O. Arnold, H. Jones)

Ok, so were singing in high school already...

Albert Hunter: Yeah, we were singing on the street corners, in the hallways and stuff

You're both from the [redacted] of Chicago, right?

Albert Hunter: Uh, no, not really. I come from 47th and Evans. Where are you from?

Omar Arnold: I grew up on 41st Street. I lived on 41st between St. Lawrence and Langley. We weren't that far apart from each other. *(laughs)*

So, Al, what school did you go to and when did you graduate?

Albert Hunter: DuSable, '58.

And then you [redacted] with The Blenders and The Blenders were together through like the mid '60s, is that right?

Albert Hunter: Yeah, we were together to about '67.

Ok. Omar, how'd you get started singing? Did you sing in high school too?

Omar Arnold: I did a little singing in high school with a group called the Harmitones at DuSable and...

That was the group with James Rushing... *(of the Devotions, who recorded on Chicago-based Nation Records– Rushing also recorded with a white female vocalist as "Koffie and James")*

Omar Arnold: Right, right. I sang with the Harmitones inside of the hallways in schools and also I played in the band at school also. And I was heavily involved with Captain Dyett over at DuSable with the Hi-Jinks *(a legendary pageant that DuSable music instructor Walter Dyett oversaw; alumni include Von Freeman, Dorothy Donegan, Dinah Washington, Johnny Hartman, Gene Ammons, Redd Foxx, and Joseph Jarman)*.

Ok. So, but you were never in any group that recorded before the 70s or the late 60s, right?

Omar Arnold: Right, never was in a group before The Sounds Of Blackness that had done any recording.

Ok, but you told me you weren't on record but you sang for ■ while with the Marvelows *(60s vocal group that had hits with "In the Morning" and "I Do," the latter famously covered by the J. Geils Band in the 70s)?*

Omar Arnold: Yeah, I did ■ short stint with The Marvelows, out there in...at that time it was East Chicago Heights, and it wasn't that long a period of time that I sang with them, I just did a little short stint with them.

Ok, so I guess that's getting up to your group The Sounds Of Blackness, so around what year did the group form and how did it form?

Omar Arnold: I imagine it was somewhere around '68 or '69.

So who were the members of the group originally in The Sounds Of Blackness?

Omar Arnold: The original members of The Sounds Of Blackness was myself, Al, along with Johnnie Jones *(who recorded solo as Hilliard Jones).*

Ok. And he was a member of The Blenders and The Five Chances also, right?

Omar Arnold: Right.

So how did you guys know each other, and how did you guys form exactly?

Omar Arnold: Well, I knew Johnnie Jones, he was the lead singer of The Blenders along with Al, and I knew him from the neighborhood. And when we put the group together he asked me, was I interested? He knew I could sing so he said, I'll give you an audition, so he tried me out, oh he loved my voice...

And Al, you sang with Hilliard...?

Albert Hunter: Yeah, we'd been friends for twenty years.

So, you put ■ group together. How'd you get involved with The Pharaohs and the Affro-Arts Theater?

Omar Arnold: The Pharaohs, which later on became Earth Wind & Fire. They did all of the musical background for us there and we traveled with them. We got involved with then and the Affro-Arts Theater because during that period of time there was a lot of things going on in the African-American community, the black community, there was a lot of things going on in the community and ■ lot of the talent that we had at the Affro-Arts, which was not only singing groups, we also had poets, dancers, Darlene Blackburn and her dancers, we had poets who would come in, we had just some people coming in and it was more like a place where we can come and just express ourselves in our own way.

Ok. So where was the theater located?

The theater was located at Oak Wood Boulevard and Drexel on the South Side of Chicago.

And Phil Cohran *(Sun Ra sideman, founding member of the AACM, inventor, and amateur astronomist)* **started the theater?**

Omar Arnold: Right Phil Cohran started the theater. Phil Cohran was performing over on the beach at what we call The Point, over on Lake Michigan. And then he moved from that area down to the Affro-Arts Theater, and that's how that came about.

So then, did you form the group specifically to perform in the theater at the time, is that what happened? Like they had acts there and you wanted to perform there?

Omar Arnold: No, we put the group together because we really was serious about doing some recordings. We had a sound that everybody enjoyed, they loved the way we sung...

So what did you do at the theater before you recorded or had songs? Did you just do covers of other songs?

Omar Arnold: I was doing radio commercials. Along with the Pharaohs, ok, we did several radio commercials. We did Touch-Tone Telephone which was written by Donnie Hathaway. We did Afro Sheen hair products. *"Beautiful People use Afro Sheen,"* so we did that with The Pharaohs. *(Note: That legendary jingle/ad was the signature commercial on the nationally syndicated* Soul Train *show, and can be seen in the* Soul Train *segment of Spike Lee's film* Crooklyn*)*

How did you get hooked up with those radio ads?

Omar Arnold: That was done, we had to go down and audition at the Vince Cullers Advertising Agency *(Cullers founded the first major Black-owned advertising agency).* They were looking for some singers to do some background work in some of their commercials and they were auditioning people. So we went down there along with a gazillion other people and they heard our sound, they loved our sound so much, they were, you guys got it. *(laughs)*

So what was your sound? Like what were you doing back then?

Omar Arnold: What we were trying to do, we were trying to do harmony that was not your usual type of harmony that you would hear in different singing groups. We had

Oh, so you wrote stuff on the Natural Four albums?
Albert Hunter: Yeah, that was with Curtis *(Mayfield)* on Curtom Records and Brunswick records and I did some stuff on Mercury.
Ok, and I know you wrote a lot of the songs on The Notations albums too, right?
Albert Hunter: I did about four songs with them.
Who were some of the other groups you wrote for?
Albert Hunter: I wrote for Jackie Wilson's last album. I did some stuff for him, I got about four songs on his album. And a group called Isis out of New York.
Yeah, weren't they, they were like a girl group?
Albert Hunter: A girl group.
A lesbian group, something like that?
Albert Hunter: Yeah, something like that. (laughs) *(Isis was an all-female jazz/rock fusion group that record three LPs for Buddha and United Artists between 1974-1977. Though not an all-lesbian band, lead vocalist/guitarist Carol MacDonald was homosexual, which was overtly reflected in her lyrics. This was not unheard of by 1974 [the women's music label Olivia was launched a year earlier] but was very unusual for a group seeking mainstream success. The late MacDonald had previously been in Goldie and the Gingerbreads, the first all-female rock band signed to a major label)*
And then you had a couple solo records in the late '70s. One of them was "Black Lady" and the other one was "Don't Bring Me No Early Mornings."
Albert Hunter: Yeah, I wrote that for Esther Phillips.
The "Early Mornings" record?
Albert Hunter: Yeah, and she died and she never got a chance to record that. She loved it. I wrote that with Lowrell Simon, I played the piano and Lowrell Simon wrote the words. *(Simon, a Chicago songwriter waqs leader of the Lost Generation, who had a top 40 song with "The Sly, Slick and Wicked.")*
Ok. So the "Black Lady" track...
Albert Hunter: That was wrote for the Miss Black America, Miss Black Chicago Pageant.
Ok, so that was different than The Black Expo?
Albert Hunter: It was like The Expo, I think it went on at the same time.
Do you remember what year this came out?
Albert Hunter: It had to be about '76.
Now there's actually not a group singing, it's all you on overdub. That's cool, it definitely sounds like different people on it. So, are you guys still involved with music today at all?
Omar Arnold: I am, I'm involved with my church, I'm heavily involved with my church which is the Life Center Church Of God In Christ, Pastor T. L. Barrett. I'm a member of the choir there and I do quite of few things with the choir there. And I can do a shout-out to my church, Life Center! *(laughs)*
You were telling me your brother sings with The Temptations now? Who's your brother?
Omar Arnold: Chris Arnold. *(Arnold is actually a member of Dennis Edwards' Temptations Review, not the official Temptations, though Edwards' group is considered by many the superior of the two current touring entities)*
Al, are you involved with music at all today?
Albert Hunter: Yeah, I just did about five tunes with the guy who did "Guess Who's Back In Town" back in town in the 70s...
Keith, so you're talking about Keith Steward *(of Heaven and Earth, a vocal group that just missed the R&B Top 40 with that tune in 1978)?*
Albert Hunter: No, I'm talking about Dean.
Dean Williams, ok. But you did some stuff on Keith's CD that he put out, is that right?
Albert Hunter: Yeah, I did write two songs. I'm still writing, man, I got a lot of songs.
And you were saying you guys even had some unreleased Sounds Of Blackness material, and it'd be cool if that saw the light of day someday.
Omar Arnold: Oh yeah. *(laughs)* I got a reel full of 'em.
Ok, cool. Well thanks so much for coming by and any last words?
Omar Arnold: Well, we just want to keep the music going. And I think we were really trying to say so much is that when we were growing up, music was an outlet for a lot of the frustrations people had in the community. You could go out on any given street corner on a summer night and you would hear two or three groups standing on the corner singing. And one group trying to outdo the other group. But it was our way of getting our songs out there, our voices. And we did that and we felt safe when we did that and we enjoyed it. So that's where a lot of that come in at, so we'd just like to carry on that tradition of street corner singing, we'd like to see that come back again instead of street corner shooting.
Albert Hunter: That's the way we fought.
Omar Arnold: We fought with songs. My group can out sing your group or your group could out sing my group and that's the way we did it when we was growing up. So we'd like to see those days come back again where we can do that and do it safely in a safe manner.

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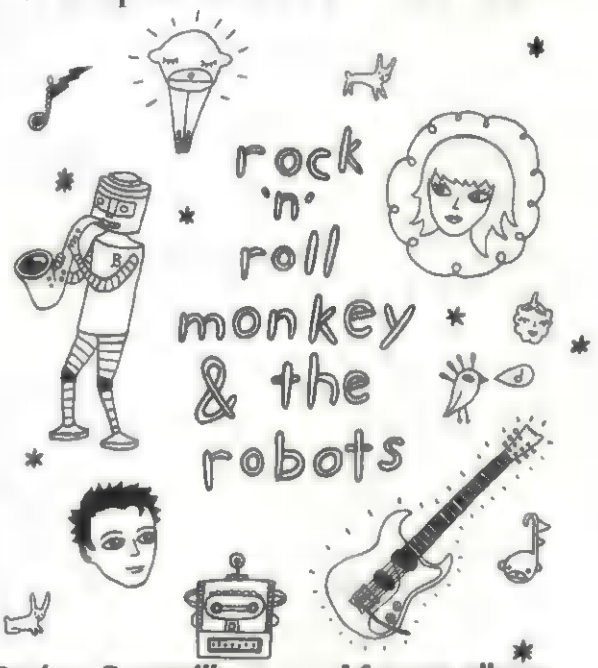

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MADELINE BOCARO

***MONSTERS of Rock: IGGY & THE STOOGES* – Live at Terminal 5 – New York City** (August 8, 2008) Statistically, they should all be dead. Some of them are. But Iggy and the surviving Stooges prevail. They defy evolution, yet they survive and persevere thanks to their primal instincts. Last week, their equipment was stolen in Canada, leading us to wonder if the reunited Sex Pistols had been in town ■ the time. If so, this would have been the biggest heist for Steve Jones to date (second only to Bowie's Spiders From Mars equipment which he made off with in the 70s!). Garbage cans and kazoos would have sufficed, but quickly rented equipment was set up and ready for the Stooges in New York City.

The Stooge machine is switched on, all the amps are cranked up to eleven, and the auditory assault begins. Once the Stooges get going, it sounds like the fight scene in *Godzilla vs. Mothra* repeating on a two-hour loop. We, the audience are the terrorized little people of Tokyo, knowing instinctively that we should run away, but we can't take our unblinking eyes off the astounding spectacle onstage. The translated subtitles in word-bubbles above our heads read, 'WOW!' 'HOLY CRAP!' 'WHAT THE F...?!'

Iggy remains free from the constraints of convention, corruption and clothing. We catch a glimpse of his saggy old butt. He bursts out of the gate with 'Loose' looking sublime with blonde streaked hair (imagine him sitting in the salon with foil wraps on his head, getting his highlights done!) He is tanned, lithe and wild. Within minutes, he's drenching himself in water, climbing the Marshall stacks and diving into the crowd, barking and morphing into The Legendary Wild Creature.

He stomps like King Kong – not the Kong who terrorizes New York City, but the primal beast who rules Skull Island, the earth shaking beneath his feet, where dinosaurs fear him and humans cower in terror and in reverence. Somehow, this small, 61 year old guy with ■ limp from a leg injury can still pull this off. Why? Because he's NOT KIDDING!

Bodies fly onto and off of the stage. Iggy dives off, moshers dive on, people are upside down, pushing and shoving – it's brutal. BUT...the ideal stance at a Stooges gig is to remain completely still and let the deafening psychedelic buzz / drone vibrate through your body and jiggle you around like a blob of Jell-O while your throbbing brain does the Stooge groove.

During "No Fun" Iggy sings the immortal lines, "C'mon Ronnie, lemme hear you tell 'em how I feel!" Ron Asheton told us 40 years ago on the record, and he's here telling us again now, cranking out the scientifically formulated noise that only he can create. It's a blessing to also have his brother Scott here on drums! Mike Watt is ■ animal on bass. Iggy invites the crowd onstage, and hundreds r.s.v.p. He leaves them up there, joining us down front, drenching us in bottled water and sharing a drink. Oddly, there are no edible missiles, or smeared condiments in sight this time around (it is legendary that 70s Stooges fans brought their own arsenals). We got through '1969' and '1970' completely food free! 'TV Eye' and 'Real Cool Time' preceded a few tunes from Iggy's *Skull Ring* album.

Steve MacKay appears on shrieking sax for 'Funhouse' (the blues jam like no other). The ruckus he creates resembles the deafening collective cries of the Earth monsters upon the arrival of giant mutant three-headed lizard King Ghidorah in *Destroy All Monsters* (also the namesake of Ron Asheton's former band).

They venture into *Raw Power* territory this time including 'Search And Destroy'. Asheton pulverizes Williamson's guitar bits and boils them into the current Stooges stew. Appropriately, the name of the venue included the word 'Terminal'. This could be fatal. Another feral howl begins 'I Wanna Be Your Dog' for the second time. They've been playing this song twice in their set ever since they reunited, because it's so great that it needs to be played twice! 'I'm Fried' from the Stooges' latest album, *The Weirdness* closed the show.

I scooped up my brain from the floor, tucked it under my arm and went home to scoff at my entire music collection in disgust, deeming none of it as worthy as the Stooges **LIVE!** Serious fun!

THE FAB FAUX: 10 Year Anniversary Concert: Live at Radio City, New York (September 20, 2008) This is just an informal review for my friends who weren't there, and those who were in a boat ■ a river with tangerine trees and marmalade skies.

I'm really not big on imitations, especially when it comes to The Beatles, but this is an exception. This was the biggest show ever for the Fab Faux, on their 10th Anniversary. It's the closest you'll ever come to experiencing the Beatles live. Every note of every instrument is re-created as near to perfect as it is on each of their multi-tracked albums.

This particular show – the psychedelic Beatles - took these songs out of the studio at last, which was not possible for the Beatles to achieve in their time. The Fab Faux are Will Lee from David Letterman's show, Jimmy Vivino from the Conan O'Brien show, plus three more incredible musician/lead vocalists - Rich Pagano, Frank Agnello, and Jack Petruzzell who play various instruments. There were at least a dozen people onstage at all times, including wonderful augmentation by the Hogshead Horns and Crème Tangerine strings.

We set off on a two-hour long 'Magical Mystery Tour' (the first song of the night) through 30 Beatles classics, with stunning projected imagery. The evening was surprisingly Harrison-heavy; 'All Too Much', 'The Inner Light', 'Within You, Without You', 'Blue Jay Way'... with an abundance of Indian instruments. They even rolled out one of Radio City's two historic 75 year old Mighty Wurlitzer pipe organs for a theatrical rave-up prior to 'Only A Northern Song'.

Many thanks were given from the stage to each Beatle, to their producer George Martin, and to Abbey Road engineers Geoff Emerick and Ken Scott who helped the band to achieve these sounds in the studio. The instrumental 'Flying' was a very cool surprise.

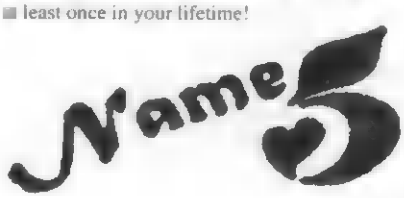
John was represented on 'She Said', 'I'm Only Sleeping', 'Being For the Benefit of Mr. Kite' and 'Good Morning'. The warped tempo and pitch changes from the tape splicing on 'Strawberry Fields Forever' were right on key. For 'Tomorrow Never Knows', a tweaked megaphone was used for the spiritual vocal effect that Lennon wanted and described to Emerick years ago; 'like the Dalai Lama chanting on a mountaintop miles away'. 'I Am the Walrus' was sheer perfection. 'Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds' was magical. The rare bird-chirping opening prefaced a glorious harp on 'Acrosss the Universe'. 'Rain' was incredible - backwards and forwards!

Paul's tunes were impeccable as well; 'Penny Lane', 'The Fool On The Hill', 'Baby You're a Rich Man', "Got To Get You Into My Life', 'Good Day Sunshine', 'Lovely Rita', and of course 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' (Parts 1 and 2).

'Yellow Submarine' brought everyone to their feet. Most thrilling was the infamous grand octave-climbing orchestral crescendo at the end of 'A Day In The Life'. The sustained, dramatic final note would have been the perfect ending to the evening, as it was quite mesmerizing, but there was much more yet to come.

'All You Need is Love' was heralded by the oh-so-familiar trumpeting trumpets. 'Glass Onion' was announced as 'the last psychedelic Beatles song'. The show-stopper was 'Hey Jude'.

The Fab Faux will probably be in your area one day soon, performing any combination of Beatles sets: entire albums, the Cavern era, etc... Go and see them ■ least once in your lifetime!



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... times someone is supposed to have said "FUCK" on ***Saturday Night Live*** though they didn't really.

1. **Reese Witherspoon**: According to a few sources Witherspoon was approved by *SNL* producer Lorne Michaels to use the "F" word as a punchline for the first post-September 11th attack show as a symbolic, cathartic comedy milestone moment representing New York's readiness to laugh again. She declined.

2. **Gilda Radner** (as "Candy Slice," her celebrated Patti Smith parody): When Radner sings "Gimme Mick," Candy's lustful homage to The Rolling Stones' frontman, the last line of the chorus sounds like, for all intents and purposes, "Are you woman, are you man? I'm your biggest FUNKED UP fan!!!" But, the censors weren't buying it, and the song has since turned up in reruns with a BOOOOOOOOOOP over the one-syllable "F"-word.

3. **Joe Pesci** – Joe played a customer trying on gangster jewelry in one skit and making stereotypical Italian gestures in a mirror to see if his new pinkie ring will work, and at one point he mimes the words "Fuck you!" several times while practicing angry gestures, but doesn't say it out loud, though you can clearly see what he's mouthing. On some TV-broadcast movies and shows they actually pixilate mouths when profanity is this clear. For example...

4. **Natalie Portman** – In a "digital short" the joke is that she does an unexpected hardcore autobiographical rap, using lines like "Shut the fuck up and suck my dick," "I wanna fuck you, too" and "I'll kill your fucking dog for fun." They ■

bleeps and cover her mouth with ■ box. Obviously, this was not live, as are all the other examples.

5. **Lorne Michaels**-As Michaels is trying to explain to special guest, George Harrison, that they could only give him $3000 if he were to produce the other three Beatles (a running gag in the early days of *SNL* was that they were prepared to pay as much as three grand for a live Beatles reunion. One of John Lennon's last statements to the world was that he and Paul McCartney very nearly went down to the studio together to call Michaels' bluff, and play a few songs, off the cuff), Paul Simon, the host, interrupts, explaining that he is not happy with the costume intended for his opening number, "Still Crazy After All These Years" (a turkey suit for Thanksgiving).

Simon: I'm having grave doubts about the opening."

Michaels: Fucking the opening?

It seems as though Lorne was tripping over his words, and meant to say something different, but, even though Don Pardo announced, minutes earlier, that portions of this program were pre-recorded, this would have surely been redone, if possible.

How to make a blowtorch out of a Pop Tart: www.pmichaud.com/toast/

Tongue twisters database: www.geocities.com/Athens/8136/tonguetwisters.html

BroadwayBootlegs: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/musicaltheater/message/3465

Best Chitown shutterbug: www.picturedujour.com/

And of course...www.royorbison.com

ROBERT DAYTON'S CAVALCADE OF COMIX

Strange And Stranger: The World Of Steve Ditko" by Blake Bell (Fantagraphics) The world of comics can often offer up extremes, especially when the artist is not tied down by severe editorial constraints. A prime example of this is the enigma that is Steve Ditko. Where there has been scores of tomes published about his fellow Marvel creative Visionary Jack Kirby, very little has been published about Steve Ditko; this may be because of the deep political beliefs that permeate all facets of his later work or it may be due to his severely reclusive nature. "Strange And Stranger: The World Of Steve Ditko" rights this wrong impeccably. Naturally, Ditko himself was not interviewed for this tome. Yet, for having to resort to the negative space of Ditko the man, author Blake Bell has done an incredibly thorough and well researched job with this fascinating coffee table book.

It begins with Steve Ditko's origins and influences, moves into his early work, soars off into the four-color Marvel Age with his creations Spider-Man and the wildly psychedelic Dr. Strange, then The Question and Captain Atom ■ Charlton, The Creeper and Shade The Changing Man for D.C., his horror tales for the Warren magazines, his independently published Randian tracts, and down into his late work that includes the likes of The Transformers colouring book. There is even a section on Ditko's lush work with his one-time studio-mate the bondage artist Eric Stanton- work that Ditko denies ever doing. The rather spicy corresponding art examples appear to show the reader otherwise.

Bell has interviewed countless people through all stages of Ditko's career. He gives the reader a detailed insight into Ditko's belief system of following Ayn Rand's Libertarian philosophies. I'm not a fan of Rand but I am glad that she exists solely for being an influence on Ditko (and she's an influence on other cartoonists as well- being at the drawing board for long hours must do strange things to one's psyche as cartoonist Chester Brown just ran in my riding for The Libertarian Party). Much of Ditko's later work consists of overly wordy, crackpot political tracts that feature interchangeable characters and this book does not flinch from showing some of this stuff. Some Ditko fans try to pooh-pooh this work (and there is more than enough variety in this book to satisfy that particular type of Ditko fan) but I find it absolutely enthralling, it is a real look into a unique artist's belief system and mindset. One key hero, Mr. A, only believes in black and white and will even let villains die! Even Ditko's later artwork looks Libertarian with its endless black and white inks, multiple rectangular frames full of boxes upon boxes, and simplified faces that wildly veer between the inexpressive and the melodramatic!

Author Blake Bell isn't a sensationalist, he is fairly objective (objectivist? Ha ha) and he truly excels at writing about Ditko's art. New and recurring themes and developments in art style are shown and described with numerous examples of art to highlight it. This book has a plethora of full-page reproductions of both Ditko's known and obscure work. A whole chapter is devoted to Dr. Strange so there are plenty of his uniquely psychedelic cosmic spreads. We get plenty of his expressionistic line work, detailed lay-outs and fight scenes, some of his fine grey washes for Eerie and Creepy, some ▬ pencils, ■ 1950s cover gallery and even a section of his rather unfunny humour comics.

With the publication of "Strange And Stranger: The World Of Steve Ditko" he at last gets his due. But does he even care? Secretly, perhaps?

"Most Outrageous: The Trials and Trespasses of Dwaine Tinsley and Chester The Molester" by Bob Levin (Fantagraphics) Chester the Molester was one of those gross out regular gag cartoons in Hustler where the set-up/punch-line was an older man who chased after prepubescent girls in various new and creative ways. In 1989, the creator and cartoonist of Chester the Molester, Dwaine Tinsley, was accused by his daughter of sexually violating her. Due to the subject matter, this book is an unpleasant read. Levin does his best to be un-biased, he does his best to not pass judgment. This book lets the reader decide if Tinsley was guilty or not by delving heavily into he-said she-saids and courtroom transcripts. However, this makes it a read only for those who have an interest in such subject matter. Don't expect funny anecdotes from the Hustler offices.

Hall Of Best Knowledge by Ray Fenwick (Fantagraphics)There are extremes of vision and there are extremes of form. With "Hall Of Best Knowledge" Ray Fenwick goes to the words extreme of words and pictures. I have never seen ■ comic go this extreme with text and still be a comic, but this does just that! Every page of this book consists of a lesson, hand drawn with self-consciously pretty borders and lettering. Each lesson features strong, intimate design that meshes with the unreliable narrator to somewhat tell ■ story. This narrator is a self-described noble genius whose lessons are deeply vain and flawed, he thinks of himself as being smarter than everyone else and even cancels certain lessons when he feels that the students are not learning enough, resorting to calling these students stupid. In the enthusiastically labeled lesson 'PARTY' the flowing script of the un-named narrator writes, "I am hardly an expert on this topic, but how could I be, when I haven't had AVERY RECENT EXPERIENCE upon which to draw from. If only one of you had thrown a party- say LAST WEEKEND- & had invited we could share in an academic discussion of the event. Instead, I offer nothing, similar to what I received recently by way of an INVITATION TO A PARTY." Later on a rising action happens with the surprise appearance of the narrator's mocking brother. Wry with whimsy. A delight to the senses.

Where Demented Wented:The Art And Comics of Rory Hayes, edited by Dan Nadel and Glenn Bray (Fantagraphics) Wall-eyed teeth-gritting visions immediately set down on paper with no editing process to get in the way, no cold blooded strategic planning, just an amphetamine-fuelled green light saying "Go!" to let loose teddy bears with knives, mad scientists, claustrophobic un-ruled spaces, shrieks in the night, demons, along with psychotronic nerve endings emanating as whirling patterns from the characters' minds. The late Rory Hayes was the most underground artist from the 60s-70s underground comics scene, he didn't produce hippy shit, people were split on him, there was no in-between. This work certainly shows his influence on the RAW set, ie. such cartoonists as Mark Beyer. This long due collection contains over 100 pages of completely unhindered work including his little seen Cunt Comics, which succeeds at making sex seem dirty and unpleasant. Dizzyingly crude and utterly mandatory, *Where Demented Wented* also features an introduction by Edwin Pouncey (Savage Pencil) and a bio by Rory's brother Geoffrey.

Herbie Archives Volume One by Richard E. Hughes and Ogden Whitney (Dark Horse) His own father may have called him a fat, little nothing, but what his father didn't know is that Herbie is everything. Or something. Oh, he's something alright! The Silver Age comic book era was an age of lucidity where there was a free flowing 'anything goes' ▬ of childlike freedom. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the ACG (American Comics Group) comic book *Herbie*. The title character, Herbie Popnecker, was a fat possibly Jewish kid with a bowl cut and big round glasses clad in shirt and tie. His chubby lips drawled, his eyes were half lidded, his expression was blank. Yet he was completely omniscient. Herbie didn't fly through the air, he walked. Dangerous animals of fact (lions) and fiction (The Lock Ness monster) would be so scared of him that they would outright say so to his face! The animals talked to Herbie! Riding the family Grandfather clock, Herbie could even go through time to meet such famous figures as Wyatt Earp. Such women as Jackie Kennedy would throw themselves at his feet. Herbie had a strong penchance for lollipops, some flavours had such powers as anti-gravity and time! But cinnamon was his favourite. It's a good flavour. It's sweet and it tingles a bit.

Artist Ogden Whitney's extra-dry, flannel-suit style worked perfectly with Herbie's deadpan expression, He could make the craziest image appear totally plausible and matter-of-fact. These archives show, even with the sad footnote of Whitney being an alcoholic that later died alone at a date that no one seems to know, that both he and Richard E. Hughes knew they were creating colourful illuminations of mirth. The productive (he wrote most of ACG's comics under

various pseudonyms) Hughes must have had a gas coming up with the wildest, funniest adventures for Herbie.

Being archives, this collection is a tad pricey but it's worth it, it'll leave you with a feeling of immense joy. Total fun! I just wish that they had reprinted the Hughes and Whitney back up stories that featured such one-off characters as Kitchy Witch and Nellie No-Date, along with the letters pages that had Herbie answer each letter personally. Herbie Archives Volume One collects issues one to five of Herbie as well as all of the early Herbie adventures and an introduction by Scott Shaw! Whets the appetite for the forthcoming Volume Two.

The Wilding by Fiona Smyth ($3.00, 970 College Street 3rd floor, Toronto, M6H 1A5, Canaduh) Sales were low for me at Canzine '08. I was a recent transplant to Toronto and I sat hands under my ass at a table looking around. I asked other old zinesters and art bookleteers how sales were for them. Pretty much the same. I wanted to make a bitter, insecure tee shirt that read, "Sales were better in the 90s." Fiona Smyth laughed at this. Fiona Smyth, man! Wow! She's like the godmother of the Canadian wild drawings set! She was always doing her own thing! Maybe time has caught up! I remember her stuff in the early 90s: freckly multicoloured wildly patterned bell bottom people shifting shape to the music of The Leather Uppers' "Sugar Sandwich." WOW! Do those kids over there at a nearby table with their psych-o-doo-lic silkscreens know? Or are they on a Fort Thunder trip? I gotta go over and tell them soon! "Yo, Fiona Smth is in da house!" Hyuk yuk. Her latest thing is a lil tiny B and W thing full of little tiny woodland folk, elves, loli-mummies, and trolls strewn in crystals and moss, their brains connecting via roots. It folds out into icey blue 8 and a half by 11 portrait of an icy blue cavernous dame breathing intricate shards of ice.

This is just a taster, we're gonna see more!

The Themes Of The Day: Observation Records by Kevin Hooyman Bearded sensitive book of unique comics linked by the title notion. The artist sits in the woods, his cat comes to visit, he then explore all of the themes of the day, lots of themes, it's a dense day. He conveys all of these themes in an honest, manner that is so refreshingly liberated from cynicism that it is spiritual! Multiple to the near infinite, delicate line flow makes all things look like soft wood producing good vibes. Long hair reaches out like tendrils. The animals talk. This lover of nature moves us to the land of the ego free with such topics as Bar TVs (they exist to distract people from themselves and others) and Art Stars (goes against the whole idea of art)...

If this book feels so weird why do all of his opinions feel so right?

CAN CON LOST AND FOUND

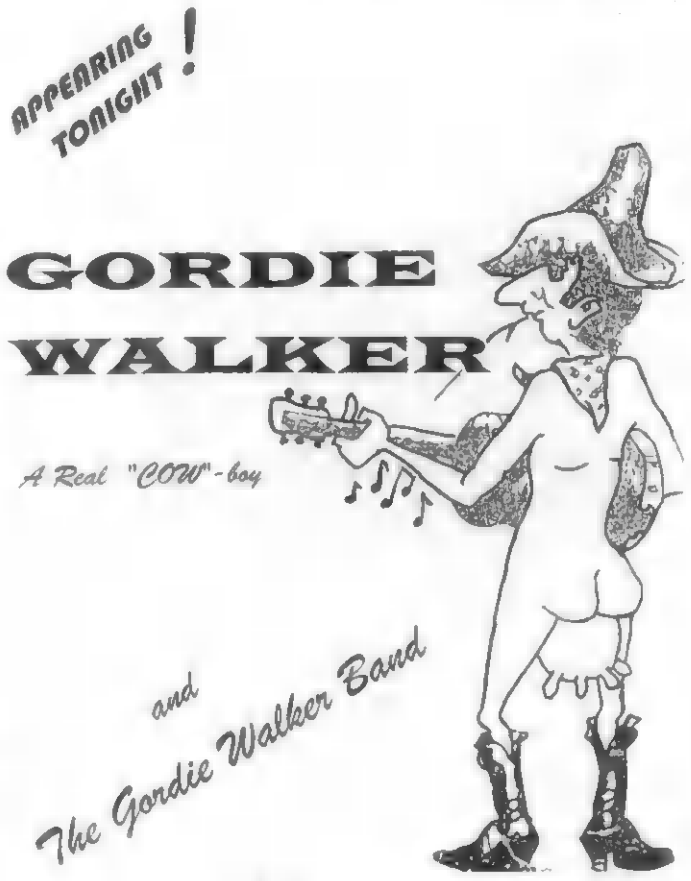
RIP Gordy Walker Oct. 16, 2008 by Robert Dayton

Gordy Walker was the King of the Down Town East Side bar scene. The Down Town East Side is an intense area of Vancouver, an intense area of Canada, an intense area of the world. Gordy brought light to this area. Everyone loved Gordy. In this part of town, where the phrase *skid row* was possibly coined, Gordy was a STAR. He was the best damned entertainer in Vancouver. This man, who was proud of the Native blood that coursed through his veins, even came from Can-Con entertainer stock. Both his parents were in the house band at the Cave, Vancouver's premiere supper club that played host to many show business greats. His Mother was on *Some Of These Days*, the first TV variety show out of Vancouver.

Gordy himself played in various acts that criss-crossed Canada, including The Money Band. "We used to give out twenty one dollar bills halfway through the show. People were thinking it was hundreds of dollars. It was twenty $1s. We did an 83 city tour. We're bombing. They're booing us everywhere we went because we were on LSD. Acid. That's what we do. Regiment. We played free-form. Total garbage." In L.A. Gordy was buddies with Mars Bonfire and briefly in the employ of Mercury Records as a songwriter. Gordy later recorded singles for Boot Records, Stompin' Tom Connors' label. It was Gordy's single "B.C. Stud" for the Regent label that is truly infamous as it tells the story of him as a young, neighbourhood boy being seduced by an older woman with all kinds of chocolate bars. "I remember the time, yes, I did when I became a man like some of you, she was thirty-nine and had a face like mud and I was only twelve when I became the B.C. Stud." It was a mainstay in his act until the end.

Gordy would often begin his set with, "My name is Gordy Walker and I'm an alcoholic." Some shows got pretty wild, to the bar manager's dismay, Gordy had a healthy bar tab and was bought drinks by everyone. He would occasionally fall off of the stage taking a few nasty scrapes and bruises. One time he didn't even remember that he had already performed "Ghost Riders In The Sky" earlier on in the night, so he performed it again rendering his Yippee-ai-ay call and response in a curious tongue. Though I feared for him, I was curiously entertained and the man could still play the guitar behind his back! He was a rollicking, white-hot guitarist playing in an honest, gritty style. Sometimes he'd break a solo to pull a wig out of his pants!

I paid a couple visits to his home at Walker Land Gardens for a BBQ or two. Gordy was such a congenial host that he gave three tours of his home in the course of one evening using a piece of old Christmas wrapping paper as a megaphone, making up stories about such ridiculous objects as the duct-taped, inflatable killer whale on the lawn. By the third tour, the wrapping paper was sagging and Gordy would rush us through, "Never mind that, it's not important."



He had such an honesty. Gordy knew he was dying. I can not remember the name of the disease but I do remember him telling me the agonizing details, how he was starting to rot from the legs up. Gordy believed that this was as a result of an infection received in The Vancouver General Hospital, possibly due to lowering hygiene standards as a result of staff outsourcing for budgetary cutback reasons. If so, this is another reason to hate Vancouver.

My final visit with Gordy was a misty one but, y'know, he kept up his sense of humour in the face of his mortality. Gordy was a fighter that way. I really miss you, Gord.

THE CONTINUING SAGA OF DR. IGUANA: TVDs

by Ken Burke Radio & TV Editor, Couch Potato Extraordinaire

The Golden Age of TV has often been decried as chewing gum television: Stuff you didn't have to think about. Contemporary programming may enjoy a higher level of sophistication, but the repeated enjoyment factor - the durability of the average TV show - has slipped badly. This is due in part to our own expectations. Dulled by decades of media desensitization, audiences require shock in the place of performance values and ironic pop culture references instead of character based comedy.

Could you imagine Lucille Ball or Andy Griffith employing the type of fourth wall busting sarcasm that the average sitcom uses today? You can't because they were better actors than today's crop; they knew how to commit to a part, allow their co-stars room to shine, and perform physical comedy. Moreover, they did it over the course of more episodes over a longer season.

Once upon a time, most of these classic shows were seen on a perennial loop of reruns by local TV stations and on cable networks ala Nick at Night. Now, because modern viewers can no longer adjust to black & white images, the only place you can find most classic show is on DVD. (Let's face it: People who prefer dreck like *Three's Company* to the original *Dick Van Dyke Show* simply because they like everything to be seen in color, are animals from a lesser order.)

During the last two decades, Hollywood has released dozens of movie remakes - albeit crappy ones - of classic shows from an earlier era. Why? Because these shows were loved and spawned profitable spin-offs modern vehicles can't seem to generate. Proof can be found in the dozens of DVDs released every year that feature classic television shows. So, before you glut your eyeballs with whatever reality show or secondary series the networks held back as replacements, check out some of the following DVD sets.

The Mickey Rooney Show "Hey Mulligan!" (Timeless Media) In their sizable discount area, a Ross Dress for Less outlet had this $4.98 two-disc set of an early TV series by Hollywood's former #1 box-office attraction - Mickey Rooney.

Arguably the greatest child star ever, Rooney acted ■ films since he was a toddler. During the Hollywood studio system years, he was cast in ■ wide variety of roles from straight drama and musicals to light comedy and even Shakespear. (He stole the show as Puck in the 1934 film version of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which boasts the infamous credit line, "Additional dialogue by Sam Wood.") Precocious and driven, the former Joe Yule jr. also tried his hand at composing symphonies, writing movie scenarios, and dreaming up get-rich quick schemes. (Rooney made many fortunes in the entertainment world, but reportedly lost a great deal of money investing in a company that made circular hot-dogs.)

Still a name performer, Rooney was down on his luck after WWII. He had married and divorced three times - actresses Ava Gardener and Martha Vickers included - and had made ■ series of mediocre movies where he had trouble shaking his Andy Hardy image.

Believing that the solution to his career malaise was in following former MGM contract player Lucille Ball into the TV sitcom business, Rooney commissioned and sold this show to NBC in 1954. Rooney's own company produced the 39 episode series based on a story by Blake Edwards, who would later achieve fame writing and directing the Pink Panther flicks. Rooney plays Mickey Mulligan - the show's subtitle/catch-phrase is "Hey Mulligan!" - an aspiring performer who works as a network televison usher. Milton Berle offers a cameo in the first show, but he was the only name performer to step up and help Rooney out.

The show boasted a wonderful cast. Oft-used character actor Regis Toomey played his dad, an old-fashioned police detective. His mother, a retired vaudeville singer, is played by Claire Carleton. And, John Hubbard, the poor man's Fred Clark, is Mulligan's exasperated boss at the network. Carla Balenda also appeared as the star's girlfriend Pat - one of the blandest, most sexless roles in early TV - who helped him get the job as a page and defends him when he screws up, which is often.

Along the way you can catch glimpses of future stars. Guy Williams, who later found fame on *Zorro* and *Lost in Space*, has a bit as an actor playing a soap opera doctor. Angie Dickinson - billed as "Angi Dickinson"- portrayed ■ sympathetic (and sexy) secretary, years before she dyed her hair blonde and became *Police Woman*. Although the show never really jells, it was a quality attempt. Well-blocked and directed, it looks and sounds much better than such oft-seen contemporaries as *I Married Joan* or the *Burns and Allen Show*. Also, when Rooney doesn't try so hard to get big laughs, he could be pretty charming.

The truth is - at the age of 35 - Rooney was too old to be playing a page-boy for the mythical IBC network. Further, the idea of him still living at home makes his character more creepy than sympathetic. Later in the series, when he was teamed with Joey Foreman - remembered today as Harry Hoo on *Get Smart* - as his best friend Freddy, he is lively, and funny, even in the most hackneyed contrivances of the 50's sitcom idiom. The lesson learned? When he wasn't chewing the scenery in some big dramatic part ala his Emmy-winning role in Playhouse 90's *The Comedian*, Rooney was shown to best advantage playing second banana to a real comic ala Phil Silvers or Buddy Hackett.

NBC had high hopes, but slated this opposite Jackie Gleason's CBS show, which enjoyed six times the audience, it sank like a stone. Oddly enough, Arthur Marx's biography about Rooney states that Gleason was a devoted fan of the show.

Best show: Egged on by their comic books and science fiction magazines, Mickey and Freddy take-off for the moon in their own rocket ship, but land just outside of their hometown where farmer's mistake them for aliens.

Worst show: A rich uncle leaves all of his money to a young niece with Mickey as her guardian. Thinking the girl is an infant, Rooney goes overboard until he discovers the girl is teenaged and ready to marry.

Bonus features: None.

McHale's Navy "Season One" (Shout! Factory) Until relatively recently, service comedies were a reliable staple of movie and TV humor, especially in the post-World War II era. Every major film comedian from the 30s through the early 80s starred in some slapstick-laden remembrance of their days in the armed services. In modern times, audience tastes for cutting edge satire, irony, and bloody realism have rendered the service comedy ■ quaint relic.

However, allow me to make the following controversial assertion. *McHale's Navy* is the best service comedy in television history. Only the first two seasons of *M*A*S*H* come close. It's most notable predecessor *You'll Never Get Rich* a.k.a. *The Phil Silvers Show*, didn't employ the one crucial element - competence. McHale's men weren't just con men and goof-offs, they were a top-notch naval crew who wracked up an enviable record in battle. Their brilliance as a fighting team excused their wackier antics with Com-Fleet and viewers at home.

The sit-com's star Ernest Borgnine - who won an Oscar for his role in the 1955 film *Marty* - was not only ■ better straight man to his second bananas than Silvers, he could effect a slow burn that would have made Edgar Kennedy from the Hal Roach comedies seethe with jealousy. Indeed, when he wasn't in the show, the sillier antics of Ensign Parker and crew prove quite tedious.

As evidenced by this excellent five-disc 36 episode collection from 1962-1963, *McHale's Navy* still works because it reinforces the time-honored American conviction that middle-management (especially as doled out by base commander Capt. Binghamton) is larded with blithering idiots who need ■ savvy blue collar guy (McHale) to save their bacon. The early episodes make a point of telling the audience that McHale was Captain of a tramp steamer who knew the Pacific Islands like the back of his hand. This explains why a pudgy middle-aged rowdy would be allowed to helm a PT boat. In addition, McHale's crew demonstrates heart by taking pity on bumbling Ensign Parker (Tim Conway), a clumsy by-the-book office, and keeps him from getting a bad fitness report by acting as if his orders make a difference.

The work of these second bananas is crucial to the show's basic high-concept plot points and every role is played with relish. Joe Flynn's Capt. Binghamton quacks like a cranky constipated duck, barking orders to his groveling effeminate subordinate, Lt. Carpenter (Bob Hastings). Vaudeville magician/comic Carl Ballantine as Lester Gruber, is early television's ultimate sleazy con-man. Good-looking Edsol Stroll as sharp-shooting Virgil Edwards preens with his shirt off more than in one season than Victor Mature did his whole movie career. Even future *Love Boat* captain Gavin MacLeod (Happy Haines) wings a few smart punchlines. And trivia buffs will dig the fact that moonshine making Willy Moss (John Wright) is played by the son of country stars Johnnie Wright and Kitty Wells.

If you're overly politically correct, you'll probably be offended that escaped P.O.W. Fuji (Yoshio Yoda) is indentured as the crew's personal houseboy, launderer, and cook. Further, you'll wonder why Joseph Heller, three years after publishing his classic novel *Catch-22*, deigned to write a thirty-minute sitcom. That said, if you like slapstick, goofy dumb-guy humor, and peerless sitcom teamwork, you ought to check out this smartly remastered set. It's still funny stuff.

Best Show: Among many fine shows, the episode titled the *Mothers of PT 73* stands out. The crew plan a big gambling wing-ding designed to bilk visiting Marines. Unbeknownst to them, the Pentagon is planning a surprise base inspection.

Worst show: *Alias Captain Binghamton*, featuring Joe Flynn is a dual role, simply didn't pan out as his alter ego was neither evil nor interesting.

Bonus features: Sporting fresh footage of Borgnine, Conway, Ballantine, Hastings, and Stroll gabbing about the show, The Crew Reunion is sweet get together with a lot of off-the-cuff humor and insights to the show. Weird thing? Even though Conway is articulate and funny, when the still vibrant 90-year-old Borgnine speaks, all listen.

The Bill Cosby Show "Season One" (Shout! Factory) Bill Cosby was the greatest stand-up comedian of the comedy album era (c. 1955 - 1977). For productivity, consistency and the sheer creativity that went with both, no other comic comes remotely close. That said, he had a bit of difficulty transferring his mix of hip reflection and observational warmth to ■ small screen series.

The Bill Cosby Show, was the comic's first starring vehicle after his groundbreaking run on the still delightful *I Spy*. It was not a major ratings success. However, seen today on this crisply remastered four-disc, 27 episode set, it plays out with far more snap than the later, more popular *Cosby Show*.

When first viewed during the early 70s, all this writer noticed was that Cosby *really* enjoyed being a jock. His character jogged everywhere, constantly exercised, and delighted in the hubris and braggadocio of the sports world. A single man on the make, Cosby's character preened and flirted when he wasn't teaching or coaching. Further, his humor was everyman stuff - pretty girls whose barking dog kept him awake nights, a ringing payphone that leads to a series of mishaps, etc. Yet, seeing this show thirty-five years later, one can clearly perceive all the black pride messages that have since been cast aside by everyone but him.

Allow me to digress. Phil Spector, in an interview with *Rolling Stone* was once

quoted as saying, "The trouble with Bill Cosby is that he doesn't know whether he wants to be ■ black militant or a white millionaire." Clearly, Spector overlooked the fact that Cosby didn't believe that material acquisition should in any way preclude his racial concerns. A lot of that is reflected in this program, which he modeled after his own neighborhood experiences growing up in Philadelphia. As gym teacher Chet Kincaid, he lived a middle-class life and dealt with other people of color who aspired to something better. White people are in his world but are no more important than anyone else. No preaching race relations, just Cos' being cool in a world that we'd all probably like to live in. When you look at this show as an extension of Cosby's dreams, it is no longer a mystery why he felt it necessary to come down hard on the values of young blacks at recent college commencement addresses.

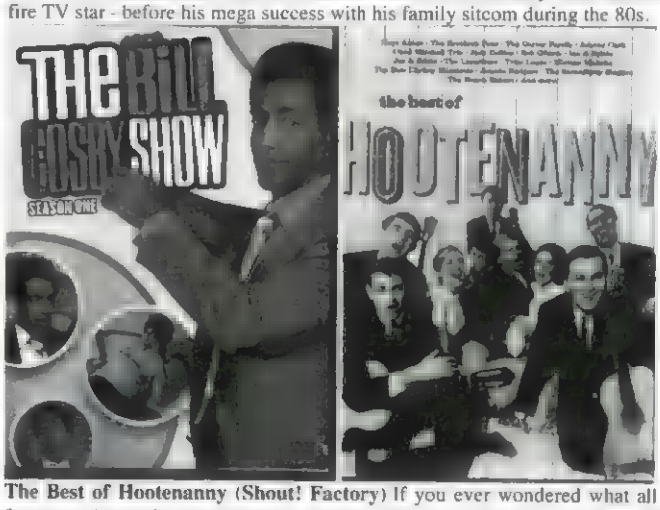
The series had a tough time finding a place for Cosby's stand-up comedy routines and sought to fit them in conversationally or in the classroom. Although he is best loved for the warmth and imagination of his monologues, as an actor he wrestles frustration and embarrassment with ■ much comedic panache as Jackie Gleason. That said, due to unpromising situations - Kincaid is stuck in an elevator, fears an old rival, etc. - a few of the shows just flat out don't work

The show's theme - co-written with Quincy Jones - is a feisty whooping soul number that seems to promise a wacky situation comedy. (Like many comics, Cosby was a frustrated singer. Aside from his 1967 hit - #11 soul, #4 pop - remake of Stevie Wonder's "Uptight Everything's All Right" - "Little Ol Man," the theme song, replete with nonsense lyrics and a fine instrumental groove, is the best thing he ever did musically.) However, though intelligent and well directed, *The Bill Cosby Show* seldom provoked guffaws the way his albums do. Neither does it elicit the ohhs and ahhs of his later series. Yet, this is his best television work because it embraced an honest point of view, subtly addressed societal problems, and derived humor from recognizable situations rather than one-liners. If you think you know Cosby's work, you need to see this show.

Best Show: The pilot episode, *The Fatal Phone Call* may be the best example of Cosby's serio-comic art. Picking up ■ ringing payphone, Kincaid gets roped into other people's problems. The wry, yet honest tone basically pre-figures the 80's dramedy trend.

Worst Show: *A Girl Named Punkin*. The Cos spends an evening with a young girl afflicted with autism and gets her to respond by the end of the episode. Beating Elvis Presley's miracle cure in *Change Of Habit* by a full hour..

Bonus Feature: *The Bill Cosby Interview*. The only special feature is a rather penetrating interview with the modern day Cosby talking about the creation of the series and how the network seemed to hate it. Indeed, the show lasted another season, but despite respectable ratings, NBC pulled the plug. Cosby experimented with variety formats and children's shows - the latter eventually made him a sure fire TV star - before his mega success with his family sitcom during the 80s.



The Best of Hootenanny (Shout! Factory) If you ever wondered what all the fuss was about with Christopher's Guest's 2004 mockumentary *A Mighty Wind*, you are well-advised to pick up this 3-DVD set which is chock-filled with folk acts from the era that movie spoofed. This 1963 - 1964 ABC-TV series featured a cornucopia of white-bred folk-singers, bluegrass veterans, gospel stars, country singers, and stand-up comics from the stage of a different college auditorium every week. Drawn from kinescopes, the black & white picture are grainy at times, but the music stands up.

Although a dominant undercurrent in popular music, folk music, even in its guise as sing-a-long music, was genuinely regarded as too controversial for most network executives. Indeed, the likes of Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, and Peter, Paul and Mary were never even asked to appear on the show. Even in this incarnation - where all the singers seem like nice, sweater clad young people from your church group - the show has an edge that seems to say, "Our passion for truth could turn on this network ■ any moment."

ABC never really had to worry. The concerns of groups like the Serendipity Singers, The New Christy Minstrels, The Brothers Four, The Journeymen and The Rooftop Singers were more about preserving the music than inciting revolution. Even legit folk purveyors ala Bob Gibson (who inspired young Bob Dylan), Judy Collins, Ian & Sylvia, and the Chad Mitchell Trio played nice for the sake of exposure on network TV.

There are some truly fine musical moments here. The Chad Mitchell Trio sing "The John Birch Society" with satiric glee. The Clancy Brother & Tommy Maken raise a tear with the tender "Will Ye Go, Lassie" Leon Bibb offers ■ definitive version of "Little Boxes" (currently the theme to Showtime's sitcom *Weed*). Pop music historians will particularly enjoy seeing a young Carly Simon with her sister Lucy, billed as the Simon Sisters, tenderly emoting through "Winkin' Blinkin' and Nod." Also, John Phillips, a couple of years away from forming the Mamas and Papas can be seen earnestly strumming and singing with the Journeymen.

Bluegrass and country acts ala Flatt & Scruggs, Johnny Cash, and Eddy Arnold seem an odd fit here, but during the early 60s many of them toured the North as folk acts as did many blues masters. (Hey, a gig is a gig.) Further, popular artists ala Jimmie Rodgers and Trini Lopez, who basically adapted folk music to their pop/rock beat, were brought in to hopefully fluff up ratings. The move didn't work. Purists, who were suspicious of the show from the start, were offended, and pop fans simply couldn't stomach the other acts.

As a concession to network TV, *Hootenanny* brought in stand-up comics as a counterpoint to all the guitar and banjos. Seen in this context, the likes of Woody Allen, Bill Cosby, and Vaughn Meader - doing his hilarious President Kennedy impersonation - solidly connect with the appreciative college crowd.

The fast-moving set features no complete episodes and no bonus features. Yet this compilation of the short-lived series is essential for any '60's music buff because it showcases an innocence and youthful zest that neither music nor television continues to possess.

The Johnny Carson Show (Shout! Factory) Long before he began his 30-year run as host of the *Tonight Show*, Johnny Carson had his shot ■ becoming a prime-time variety star. The story of his ascension is legendary. A young comedy writer and host of a local Los Angeles show *Carson's Cellar*, he churned out gags for one of early TV's greatest comics, Red Skelton. One night, just before a live broadcast, Skelton injured himself badly. With no time to bring in another big-name comic or cull an appropriate rerun, young Carson stepped into Skelton's shoes and hosted the show. Applauded as much for his bravery as his skill, the good-looking Nebraska-native was offered his own half-hour show by grateful CBS executives.

On this smartly compiled two-disc set, one can easily perceive that Carson - who looks terrified on the first show - was a child of radio. When his wit turns acerbic, he ■ channeling Fred Allen, who had died earlier that year. When he is mildly boastful or self-deprecating, he punches his lines with Jack Benny's facial expressions and fey vocal flair. Further, a great deal of the show's writing, which is often sharp, works better as wordplay than as visual comedy.

In the regular cast, Carson employed pixiesh young singer Jill Corey to play his real life wife Jody - who is occasionally seen on the show as herself. Carson takes a page out of Skelton's book, by parodying other shows including Edward R. Murrow's *Person to Person* and Walter Cronkite's *You Are There*. Both sketches rely on Carson's thin impersonation of the stars in question and wear out their welcome quickly.

Bit by bit, Carson develops a rapport with the camera and his fledgling stock company, but the show never really clicks because at this juncture in his career, the host doesn't understand his own strengths ■ a performer. Although good-looking and pleasant, the host's legendary coolness plays poorly in prime time. Yet, in retrospect, his show moves faster than other sketch comedy programs of the era and is genuinely worth seeing.

Best Show: Dorothy Shay, the original Park Avenue Hillbilly, stole the show on an episode devoted to a fictionalized account of her life story.

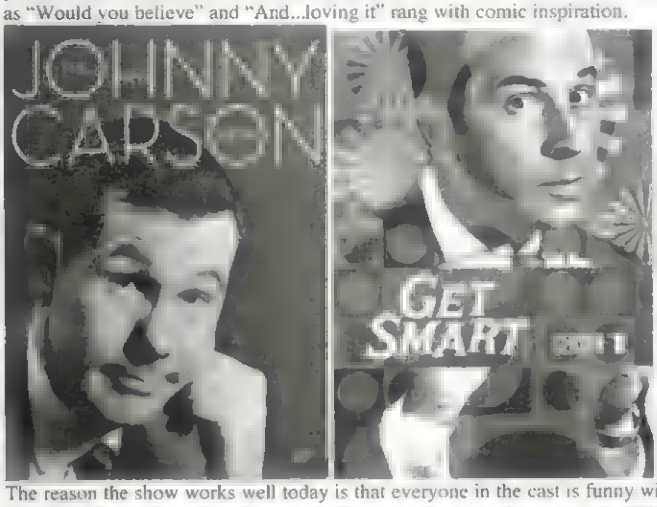
Worst show: The debut was deadly dull and Carson looked scared stiff.

Bonus Features: Lots of nostalgic goodies include Jello commercials, wherein a very folksy Carson invokes the name of his soon-to-be ex-wife Jody and his three boys. A rather revealing glimpse at Carson's first talk show - a dull afternoon affair - and ■ clip of his hosting Jack Paar's *Tonight Show*. One has to wonder, what happened to transform Carson from just another network TV time-waster, into the King of Late-Night?

Get Smart "Season 1" (Time-Life) Don Adams actually created the nucleus of Maxwell Smart on the old *Bill Dana Show*, where he played house detective Byron Glick in occasional sketches with Dana's Jose Jiminez character. (He was also the voice of cartoon penguin *Tennessee Tuxedo* and, much later, law-enforcement cyborg *Inspector Gadget*.) A pretty fair late-50s sick comic and impressionist before he got into TV, he seemed born to play Smart. Clumsy, yet honest, vain, yet courageous, Agent 86 was a true American go-getter and edgy clown prince. Best of all, he took on the James Bond / *Man From U.N.C.L.E* craze with a *Mad Magazine* style comedic frenzy.

This 4-disc 30-episode set showcases remastered episodes in the order that they were aired and deftly recreates the program's momentum from struggling one-note parody to its glory as a multi-layered comedic sitcom. Created by Mel

Brooks and Buck Henry, the show is at its early best concentrating on Smart's seeming inability to master the kooky Napoleon Solo type spy gadgets (the shoe phone, exploding cufflinks, miniature camera, gas tablets, etc.) Control has issued, the cowardice of burnt out spy dog Fang, and the star's brilliantly timed pratfalls and catchphrases. From the start, his utterance of such now familiar lines as "Would you believe" and "And...loving it" rang with comic inspiration.



The reason the show works well today is that everyone in the cast is funny within the confines of their respective parts. The leaders of KAOS - the international organization of evil - are nearly as funny as Smart. So is fellow agent 44 (the guy always stuck in a locker, trash can), the Charlie Chan-like Hawaiian detective Harry Hoo (Joey Foreman), and the ceaselessly amusing Hymie the Robot (Dick Gautier). The Chief, played by Ed Platt, provides all the exposition, but conjures wonderful slow burns in counterpoint to Smart's exasperating clumsiness and didactic demands to use the constantly malfunctioning Cone of Silence.

Best of all was Smart's interplay with Agent 99, played by the Barbara Feldon. A model and spokesperson for Top Brass hair ointment ("I want to talk to all you tigers out there," she purred seductively, "Oh, *you* know who you are..."), Feldon's timing in her exchanges with Adams is both flawless and sympathetic. Moreover, their slowly burgeoning attraction - in the final analysis- is what made the show so good. (These days, they don't bother with sexual tension. The characters end up in the sack together after about three episodes.)

As a political and pop culture satire, seasons two and three were *Get Smart's* best. Indeed, Bernie Kopell's portrayal of Kaos leader Siegfried made the ensemble even funnier. Yet, this first season contains many laugh out-loud moments and holds up much better than the subject matter it was spoofing.

Best show: *Ship of Spies, Part 1 & 2*, is not only the best written mystery from the first season, but showcases ■ slew of deft movie parody moments that would later become commonplace in co-creator Mel Brooks's films and ■■ Carol Burnett's variety show.

Worst show: Filmed in black & white, the pilot *Mr. Big* moves a bit slowly and focuses too much on Control's canine agent Fang. The series went color during its regular run and looks sharp courtesy of digital remastering.

Bonus features: Still sounding sexy, Barbara Feldon provides short audio intros to each episode. On the aforementioned pilot episode, co-creators Mel Brooks and Buck Henry offer separate audio commentary tracks. Brooks is by far the most entertaining and gives the show credit for helping launch his career as a movie director/producer. Additionally, the former Sid Caesar staff writer reveals that during the planning stages, he was asked to play Smart which would have proved dismal. Or, ■■ Milton Berle famously said, "Mel Brooks is a genius, but his delivery belongs on ■ truck." By contrast, Buck Henry coolly details his role as the show's story editor until he enjoyed his great success with *The Graduate*. The screenwriter also remembered that Don Adams insisted on doing most of his own stunts until one resulted in a concussion. Informative and entertaining stuff.

The Best of The Adventures of Ozzie & Harriet (Shout! Factory) One of the blandest hit shows in television history, *Ozzie & Harriet* personified the 50s post-war ethos. Pleasant white middle class Americans, they lived the suburban good life, where all they had to worry about was finding an ample supply of tutti frutti ice cream or accidently hurting someone's feelings. In fact, so untroubled were the Nelson's by the realities of everyday life, the family's patriarch didn't hold down any recognizable job. (It didn't stop former big band singer Harriet Nelson from wearing pearls with her house-dress though.)

There was not an ounce of genuine acting talent in the whole Nelson family. By comparison, the simpering cast of *Leave it to Beaver* were skilled method actors. However, the Nelsons were professional to the bone ■■ they hit their marks and delivered their lines to an appreciative laugh track. The stories were tepid, the situations lacked realism - the Nelson kids didn't exchange one cross word with their parents in over 400 episodes - and the pacing was dull.

Yet, for all that, the show remains watchable for two reasons. 1.) It enjoyed a certain unpretentious - dare I say nostalgic - charm. 2.) Ricky Nelson sings at the end of the later shows. It should be noted, that although he supported Rick's singing career, father Ozzie, never really understood the second reason. Years later, when syndicators asked him to trim two extra minutes from the reruns for added commercial time, Nelson left his own interminably clumsy close-ups in and cut out son Ricky's songs. (This is why you find so many pointless public domain DVD collections in department store bargain bins.)

Shout! Factory's two-disc set offers a mix of 24 different episodes culled from the program's 1952 - 1966 run. From the start, *Ozzie & Harriet* forged a distinctive, formulaic style. Every time one of the Nelson's uttered a socko punchline, it was done in a separate close up. Further, after the "irrepressible" Ricky - who was the show's break-out star from the beginning - outgrew his "I don't mess around, boy" catchphrase, he was saddled with actors in their mid-to-late 20s playing his teenaged friends. By the time Ricky and David were supposedly in college, their "peers" resembled middle-aged suburbanites. Best of the supporting players, the ever gregarious Skip Young - who played Rick's hapless pal Wally Plumstead - portrayed teenaged types seemingly into his forties. Yet, long before guys played the *Gilligan's Island* inspired "who would you rather have: Ginger or May Ann" game, American teenaged girls judged each other on who would they rather end up with - doe-eyed rockin' Rick, or patient, droll David. Most went for Rick because of the music, but in retrospect, David Nelson proved the more dependable husband, friend, and partner. Watching them now, and matching up the late Rick Nelson's history to the program's many personal inferences, we can see that this mild show was oddly autobiographical.

Best show: *The Fraternity Rent Out a Room* is the Nelson show at its irrelevant best. Misunderstandings abound as Rick's fraternity rent out ■ room to a good looking stranger. Better still, Rick sings at the end.

Worst show: *The Game Room*. Although filmed in goopy color (1966), the show creaks with age as Ozzie and crew try to go through their contrived bumbling paces one more time. A few months later, ABC mercifully cancelled this painful antiquity.

Bonus features: Each disc houses a bonus feature more interesting than the actual shows. Disc 1 has an original *Ozzie and Harriet* radio show from the 40s and a film bio on the family. Disc two features a 1937 short film about young David Nelson called *Doing Right By David*. Disc 3 showcases some solidly edited home movies, a promo of their famed *The Circus* episode (where girls get to drool over the Nelson boys flying on the trapeze). Disc 4 sports a couple of trivia quizzes. More importantly, each disc contains one episode with audio commentary courtesy of David Nelson and Rick's son Sam (who wasn't even born when his dad starred on the show). Further, viewers have the option to go right to the seven songs Rick sings on the show, which include "I'm Walkin'," "Whole Lotta Shakin Goin' On," "I Believe What You Say," and "Trying To Get To You." In the background, the peerless teenaged James Burton can be seen playing guitar.

The Milton the Monster Show "The Complete Series" (Shout! Factory) Saturday morning cartoons were king when this show debuted in 1965 and the more gimmicky, the better. Producer Hal Seeger who had scored a solid hit with his syndicated parody *Batfink* ("My wings are like a shield of steel!"), masterminded this comedic cartoon series starring a misunderstood monster and his cronies. Cheaply animated even for an era filled with bad animation, the attraction here is the first-class gag writing, which paved the way for a generation of similarly toned Nickelodeon cartoons ala *My Fairy Godparents* and *Ahh! Real Monsters*.

All 26 episodes of this show are included in this four-disc set and frankly, the title character is pretty wimpy. While being created Frankenstein-style by Professor Weirdo and Count Kook, too much tenderness potion is added, and Milton - who occasionally spews clouds of steam from the top of his head - ends up being a mama's boy with a southern accent. Milton's adventures are pretty similar to those of *Casper the Friendly Ghost* - he's always looking to make friend's with normal sentient beings. As often as not, when ordinary people see him as the monster that he is, they scream and he dejectedly shuffles home to the comfort of the other monsters that he lives with.

Each episode contained three six minute cartoons. As the title character, Milton was in every show, but his supporting cartoons were far funnier. Penny Penguin is a bratty girl version of Chilly Willy and Muggy Doo is a Boy Fox who stirs up good-natured trouble. Stuffy Durma is a hobo who inherited $10 million but - ala Jiggs in *Bringing Up Father* - tries to deceive his manservant so he can eat, dress, and live like ■ bum. Flukey Luke is a hapless western traveler with a faithful Indian companion (who speaks with a Jewish accent), who basically triumphs over the bad guys through sheer dumb luck. Best of all is Fearless Fly, a tiny mild-mannered insect who dons glasses that generate enormous energy through the delicate muscles in his head, imbuing him with superpowers. Each character benefits from snappy joke-writing and inspired dead-pan voice acting.

Taking a cue from Hanna-Barbera, producer Seeger introduced each character's episode with their own catchy theme song, which on DVD becomes tedious rather quickly. Also, this writer flinched ■ the abundant use of Asian, Hispanic, and Jewish stereotypes. (Which probably explains why this hasn't been shown since its solitary season on network TV.) That said, funny stuff resides here and

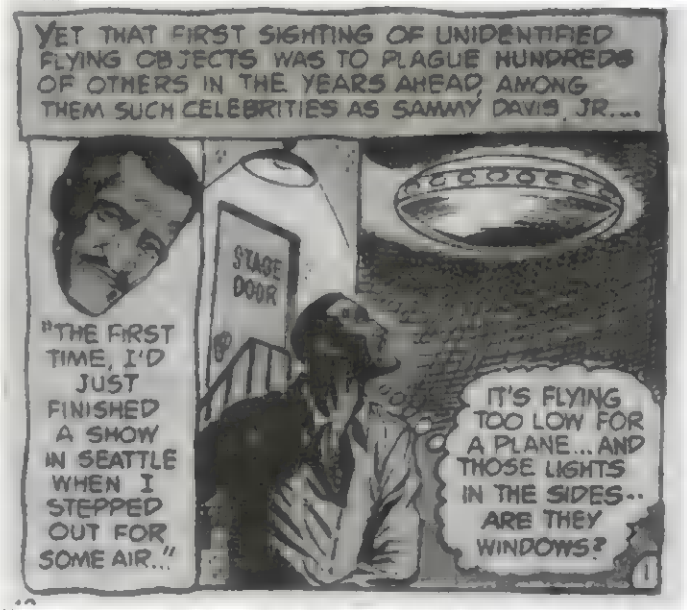
you nostalgic boomers hoping to create ■ ABC Saturday morning kidfest, should dig most of it.

Bonus features: Fortunately, the bonus section allows you to bypass all the lame Milton the Monster cartoons in favor of the superior Fearless Fly, Flukey Luke, and Stuffy Durma segments. Disc two boasts a live action test filming of Flukey Luke featuring Seeger's own kids in dog costumes. The result is so bad it is hilarious. Disc three contains a glimpse ■ Seeger's home movies of actors dressed up as Milton and Fearless Fly at a New York Toy Fair. Disc four includes a previously uncollected cartoon, *Wilbur the Wanted*, ■ character who wants to get revenge ■ a rabbit who framed him for a crime.

SAMMY DAVIS JR. UPDATE

Password (CBS, 4 episodes 10/9/1963, 7/2/1964, 5/6/1965, 6/17/1965) What is really nice about seeing Sammy ■ this show, as opposed to "What's My Line" where he was "Mystery Guest" or erudite panelist, is that on *Password* he gets to be really competitive. Davis *LOVED* television, and doubtlessly he watched games shows religiously and like us all played along and ■■■ always ■■■ he could do better than the folks ■ TV. On his first two appearances he is sharing the chairs with fellow Rat Packer Peter Lawford and he is in full showbiz mode, but on the latter two shows (in which Rosemary Clooney and Davis are each paired with a series of common folk who try to guess words from single word clues) he seems more focused on the game and he beams with pride when he does well. Probably the greatest moment comes when he is given the word "square" and he responds not with a smarmy Sammy stage laugh, but with a sincere burst of incredulous surprise, as if the idea that the word "square" could be in the same room as the hippest cat in town ■■■ almost mystically absurd.

Ghosts #40 (DC Comics, 1975) In 1975 DC comics boldly doubled the quarter price rival Marvel was charging and returned comics to their 1940s' length of 64 pages. This was a failure for two ■■■■■. First, most kids didn't have fifty cents to spend on each issue of *Batman Family* or *Our Army at War*. More importantly, doubling the pages meant that like the worst of the 64 page Golden Age comics, there was plenty of filler, much of which was incredibly mediocre. And here is where Sammy came in. Were this a 32-page issue of *Ghosts* all the stories would be eerie horror tales, EC-inspired ghost stories without the great EC twists. But this padding is just an illustrated history of UFO sightings, included one by Sammy. The "Eyes From Another World" ■ unghostly, but not unhip, thanks to Samala



National Lampoon (January, 1976) This drawing of Sammy comes from the faux "Irish Marketplace" ad in ■ comic book called "A Few Brave Lads" lionizing IRA terrorists. You can see Sammy's wax figure in ■ "Plastique Museum" (because they are terrorists, so instead of wax it's plastique explosive, get it? The comic is not that funny, and 1976 was a weird year for *Lampoon*, as the core of comic geniuses that made the 1970-1975 issues so classic had left, and ■ few writers had gone on to work on *Saturday Night Live*. There were still some funny cats, but something was off kilter (it was not unusual for a good article to go on for many many more pages than it should have, there seemed to be ■■ obsession with insulting SNL for being ■ Lampoon ripoff, and the amazing comic book inserts which coupled the greatest comic book artists with genuinely goofy ideas (Tarzan raised by cows, a non-animated corpse superhero, G. Gorodon Liddy adventure tales). This IRA comic, though it has a nice anti-Brit ending, is definitely subpar on the comic tip, but the main kick here is that this is a drawing of SDJ by the great Neal Adams!

Kevin O'Brien Lambat shows O'Brien moments after Protestant bombing.
Brendan Behan Room; mechanized display of the poet collapsing under the weight of consciousness. Hoist a jar with life-size Samuel Beckett figure, receive complimentary photo. See singing model of Sammy Davis do "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling"; shure it'll break your heart ■ two . . .
10 Pence and AYE for AN EYEFUL!
Kitty O'Shea's
Drunk Monk Road, Dublin

flesh.

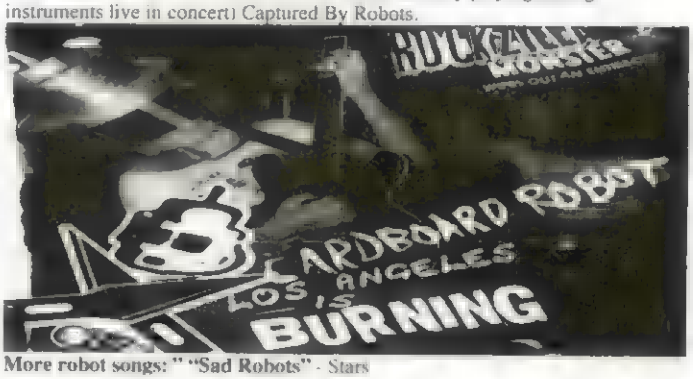
MONKEY ROCKNROLL UPDATE

MORE MONKEY BANDS: Ape On The Roof – Aghi Narottama's Indonesia-based electronica act. US debut is **"Ape-O-Lution." Chimps Eat Bananas** – Obscure pre-Chumbawumba English lo-fi band

MORE MONKEY SONGS "Back To Monkey City" Jeff Dahl, **"I Want A Monkey For Christmas"** – Barbary Coasters, **"Monkey Bump"** – The Bama Lamas. **"Monkey Swing Monkey Doo"** CD by Dr. Sparkles (songs: **"100 Monkey mambo," "Flinging Poo at the Zoo," "Star Monkey,"** and **"Monkey Love."**), **"Never Kill An Ape"** and **"Suck An Ape's Dick"** – Wesley Willis

ROBOT ROCKNROLL UPDATE

Cardboard Robot/Rockzilla Monster– This hipster design firm/T-shirt maker recently had an ad campaign with a guy in a cardboard robot head rocking out, apparently in a band called Rockzilla Monster. On the website there is a film of a raw, one might say semi-inept guitar and drum band mad eup of dudes in cardboard robot heads playing rock. The most bogus thing about this is that they use the abbreviation CBR in the ad, which is also used by the legitimate robot rock band (the only one I know of with robots actually playing analog instruments live in concert) Captured By Robots.



More robot songs: " "Sad Robots" - Stars

MIDGET ROCKNROLL UPDATE

This costume was in all the stores this Halloween (it's not for actual midgets, your feet go in the amp, if you're an "average")

Note: www.rockmidgets.com is not about rock midgets.

CHIPMUNKS UPDATE

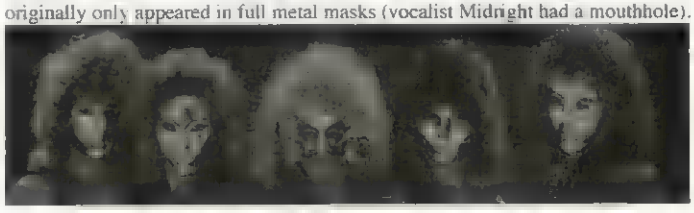
Alvin and The Chipmunks (2007, Fox) Christmas 2007 was a huge day in Chipmunks history ▬ the half-century career of the rodent rockers went supernova with ■ big budget movie. Though the computer generated Chipmunks don't have brilliant designs (the puppetronic baby Chipmunks in the little known 2004 false-start re-launch looked better) they become pretty real-ish as the movie progresses, maybe because they got actual actors to do the voices. Hiring three hunky youngish heartthrobs for a role where their images and recognizable voices would be absent is interesting, but I suppose Justin Long (as Alvin, b/k/a/ "I'm A Mac, you're a PC"/wrench target in *Dodgeball*), Jesse McCartney ▬ Simon, b/k/a/ Adam Jr. on *All My Children*/ the boy band Dream Street/*Hannah Montana*), and Matthew Gray Gubler (as Theodore, b/k/a dude from *Criminal Minds*) do a good enough job -- I've heard worse chipmunks. Though I've heard him denigrate the role, David Cross as the manipulative, abusive record label sleazoid exec is very funny. Pro Skater/*My Name Is Earl*-dude/Scientologist Jason Lee as David Seville is OK, but is not too sharp at interacting with non-existent animated co-stars and is not convincing at all when he gets angry, sorta fumbling the catchphrase "ALLLL-VINNN!" While I hesitate to suggest that Will Ferrell should consider doing anymore TV show-based movies he would have been great getting frustrated with his troublesome foster kids. That said, the inability to rage against the rodents isn't a deal-breaker because the biggest shift from classic Chipmunks to this incarnation is that the boys are not necessarily naughty. When Cross' character abducts the trio to make them superstars they are reluctant to break any rules or do anything un-saintly because of how much they respect Seville's discipline and judgment. Contrast this with the 1960s' Alvin who hired ■ $10,000 orchestra behind Dave's back, or intentionally sent ■ neighbor critical of Chipmunks music to an insane asylum. The flick was a super success, so expect more. The "Squeakwel" is scheduled for X-Mas '09, directed by Betty Thomas (of Second City and *Hill Street Blues* fame) and will re-introduce the Chipettes. On the DVD there are a lot of extras, mostly real actors joking about the Chipmunks' diva attitudes. But for Chipmunks-heads there is one segment where Ross Bagdasarian, Jr. (the man behind the 80s revival) coaches the hunks on how to do Chipmunks pre-sped up slow talking and RJ's partner Janice Karman (who voiced the 80s' Theodore, and the Chipettes) flirts and jokes with the boys.

Alvin and the Chipmunks OST (Razor & Tie, 2007) **"Undeniable"** (Razor ■ Tie, 2008) The soundtrack CD starts bad, and ends sublimely, but it's the meat in the middle that defines it. There's nothing wrong with the opener, a Chipmunks cover of "Had A Bad Day," but it harkens back to the lazier days of the 80s where they just covered current songs with little comedy or twists. But in a baffling move the CD then features a version of the Chipmunks classic "Christmas Song" that is not from the movie and not the original Ross Bagdasarian version, even though the CD also features both of the those versions (the previously mentioned sublime ending is ■ short suite of original 1950s recordings). This awful recording is not using any voices we are used to, and the David Seville is mean, and there's no conceivable reason this should be ▬ the CD. But once that painful tune is over the Dee Town production team (whomever they are) takes over. There is actually something genuinely funny and fun about making balls to the wall generic Miami dance tracks using the Chipmunks, and making way too many of them, with super pro girl singers and rappers backing up Chipmunks. "Updating" the Chipmunks to the hip hop age should be painfully bad, but it's done with some absurd humor (Autotuning a Chipmunk voice, changing the *Witch Doctor* chant to "Oo *to the* Ee *to the* Oo *to* Ah Ah *to the* Ting *to the* Tang *to* Walla Walla Bing Bang") and weird conviction and I actually enjoy this more than most of the 80s recordings (not as good ▬ *Chipmunk Punk* or their Country albums but better than their Madonna and Michael Jackson covers). In the movie even the Chipmunks argue that these dance tracks don't make as much sense ▬ the nice Dave Seville tunes. What really surprised ▬ was that more than a year ■ advance of the sequel they released a follow up album "Undeniable." This album features a new version of their 80s theme song, and is mostly cover songs (Bob Marley, Bon Jovi, Journey) and a few Dee Town dance tracks that are pretty decent, but this isn't ▬ good as the 2007 record.

MASKED ROCKNROLL UPDATE

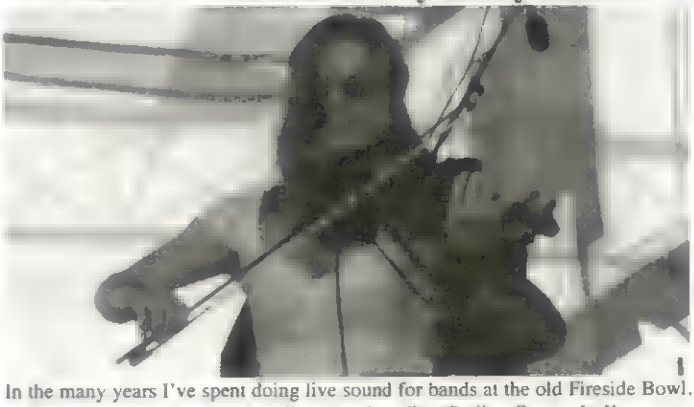
Snakefinger – This Residents collaborator dressed in full mummy costume in the ace guitarists early days working with the band.

Crimson Glory – Florida prog/hair metal band from the 80s (plus reunions) originally only appeared in full metal masks (vocalist Midnight had a mouthhole).



ONE MAN BAND UPDATE

THERESA ANDERSON by Randy Lancelot



In the many years I've spent doing live sound for bands at the old Fireside Bowl, DC9 in our nation's capital, hell, even that dive Smiler Coogan's I've come across more "One ▬ bands" than I could shake a mic stand at. I've mixed Quintron, the Lonesome Organist, Captured by robots, the Flying Lutenbachers. I even did a tour with Wesley Willis (which is pushing the bounds of the definition, I admit). I've seen them both pre-"digital" with piles of equipment tied to bodies and contraptions strapped to assorted limbs as well as the more recent outfits with pedals, backing tracks, Ipods, laptops and such. I've yet to run across a One (wo)man band that is better than Theresa Andersson. While it is getting ▬ common to assemble some drums, ■ guitar, maybe a keyboard, with some loop pedals and have ■ go I can't recall seeing anyone who has her vocal complexity and pop hooks manage to pull off a more fabulous show.

Theresa grew up in rural Sweden, but moved to New Orleans when she was 18, where she began the process of stewing herself in the gumbo of song and culture. She put out a couple CDs in the mid 90s that leaned towards Jazzy Pop or indie folk and spent time in Nashville and Austin before finding her way back to NOLA. Somewhere along the way she married ■ local puppeteer by the name of Arthur Mintz and they adopted ■ really sweet blond Lab called Ruby. While she followed Arthur to various festivals she came to see the Chicago based puppeteer Blair Thomas who does a one man show that includes drums and puppets, or puppets playing drums, or drums playing puppets, something or another (I haven't seen that particular show). That turned out to be the inspiration she needed on how she could continue to tour without the expense of a full band.

So she got down to writing and recording and then made a couple of videos in her kitchen that she intended to use to show promoters so they could get an idea of exactly what they were booking. There is plenty of musical dreck on YouTube, but her catchy tunes and engaging dances, no doubt designed to mask the complex technical moves needed to record and run all the loops, became some sort of an Internet sensation.

Now she and Arthur and Ruby the Lab pile into the van and wander off to the far corners of the world. Ruby is a sweet old pup, for whom we always make sure to have ■ case of chilled bottled water ready to go, and she holds down the dressing room. Since I help them ▬ up and run the sound I've personally inspected all of the gear and there are ▬ trick baking tapes or secret Milli Vanilli pedals, it's all Theresa. Arthur has used the talk back mic on the PA system to whisper sweet

nothings and professions of his undying love thru her personal in-ear monitor while she is playing. I've watched her play around and improvise during sound checks, finding [illegible] beats, getting [illegible] accidental hook when a loop goes off the rails [illegible] just trying to make [illegible] it's all set up right. Arthur is without [illegible] doubt the most enthusiastic fan, with a wide-eyed smile he claps and stomps and yells encouragement like few others. In spite of the fact he's sees all the rehearsals, shows, sound checks, and kitchen sessions his enthusiasm is that of a first time viewer every night. And Ruby never barks during her show. Actually I'm not sure if she ever barks.

It takes Theresa about 3 weeks to figure out how to put together each of the songs, technically, which is hardly an efficient way to write, but there are no clunkers on this disk. If anything her live show is much better than the CD, which is not meant as a dig against the recordings, which [illegible] excellent. Her biggest "hit" is "Na Na Na", which she pulls out an autoharp, drums, a violin, plucks gentle catchy riffs [illegible] an acoustic guitar along with a full vocal harmony group called the Kitchenettes while singing. It's not easy to sing and play guitar, but plucking complicated 6 string bits as you drop the Kitchenettes backup vocals into the mix while holding a [illegible] for 10 seconds or [illegible] is a superhuman feat. Phil Collins or Don Henley drumming away while doing lead vocals are flat out wussies by comparison.

The Kitchenettes are 4 young ladies, all named with [illegible] backstory, that [illegible] [illegible] integral part of much of this CD and she takes pains to introduce them during her show. 2 of them stand in the corner smacking their gum and smoking cigarettes, while a 3rd is a bright eyed new kid in the big city with [illegible] soaring voice. All of them are corralled by a mother hen type who makes sure the ducks are [illegible] in a row while lending some of her own raw gutbucket and Theresa introduces each of the Kitchenettes while she records their separate loops, complete with back story that makes the song sound like "1963...sounds like heaven".

On "Birds Fly Away" she starts with the handclaps and Kitchenettes before she drops the needle on [illegible] old Smokey Joe Johnson LP and pulls the drumbeat from that old vinyl groove--and do you have any idea how hard [illegible] is to drop the drumbeat sample into the mix after half the loops [illegible] already recorded. This is madness I tell you, and you ain't gonna find any blinged out studio gangsta with Cheetos stuck in his diamond grille manning the wheel's of steel pull this off once, let alone every night. I might also add that the record is in nearly perfect shape, a VG+ with only very light loss of luster and a few light surface marks, probably from the paper sleeve, rather than DJ abuse, for you vinylphiles out there holding your chest.

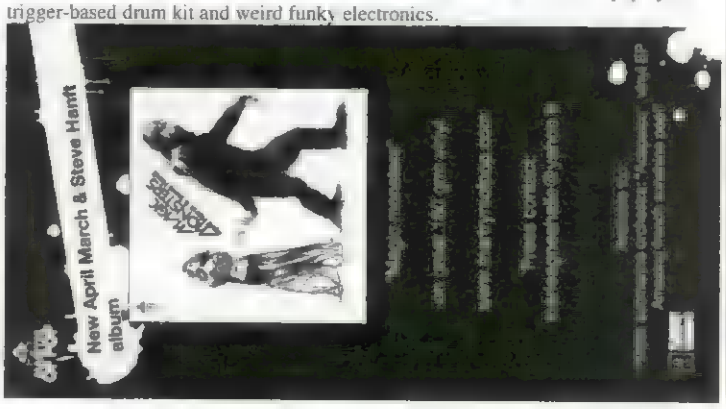
Theresa's vocals remind me a bit of Harriet Wheeler of the Sundays, but less wispy. She's light and airy when she needs to be, but she can flat out bring it. "Innan du Far", a duet of a Scandinavian folk melody, features Norwegian Ane Brun, has a certain quality like the Sundays as if they were a spare, windswept, epically cold plain. In a similar vein "Hi Low" strikes [illegible] as what "Beyond the Sea" would have sounded like if written by the Sundays instead of Bobby Darin.

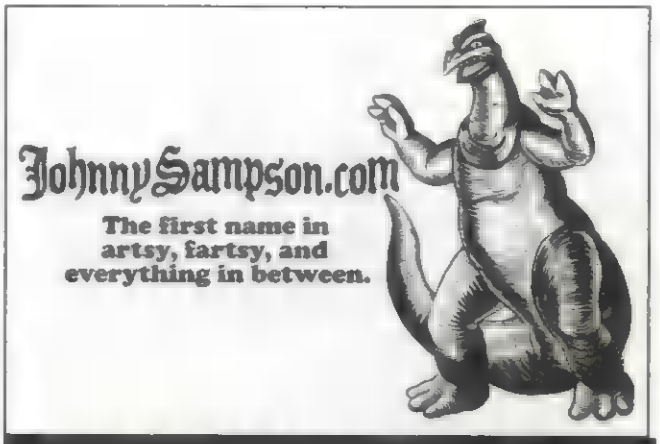
At times she might even sound like her countrywoman Nina Perrson of the Cardigans, but she doesn't need [illegible] rely as much on the cutsey cooing. Often her vocals reminds me of a bird swooping and diving, ascending only to suddenly turn and drop. "The Waltz" features some small bit of that cooing which tums a fairly routine waltz rhythm into a gentle lullaby as she rocks her sweetheart from waltzing all night away to sleep in her arms, while the violin and glockenspiel seem to float dreamily above. Her songs have a certain melancholy that seems bred in the cold Scandinavian north, which offer a bit of a twist on the gritty perseverance of her NOLA influences. The classic music of NOLA is always looking up [illegible] a celebration of life, with the understanding that you may already be down, and Theresa's own roots offer a different sort of solemnity, an almost somber ache that fills [illegible] piece you didn't know was missing.

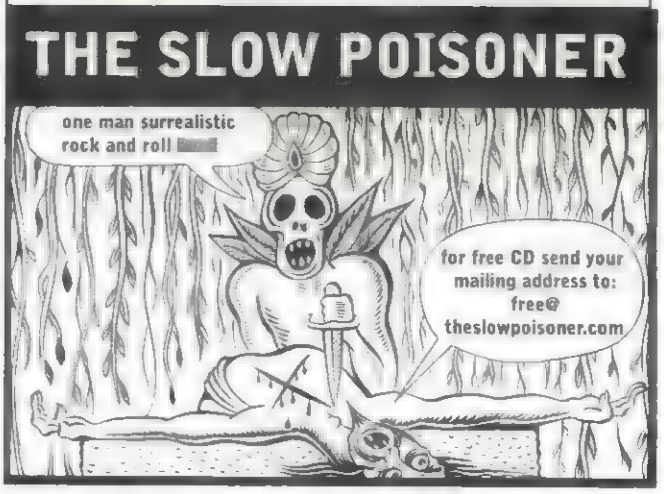
The Aliens- Austin TX based OMB with guitars, Drum Machine, and turntable doing a sort of Psychedelic Kurt Cobain thing.

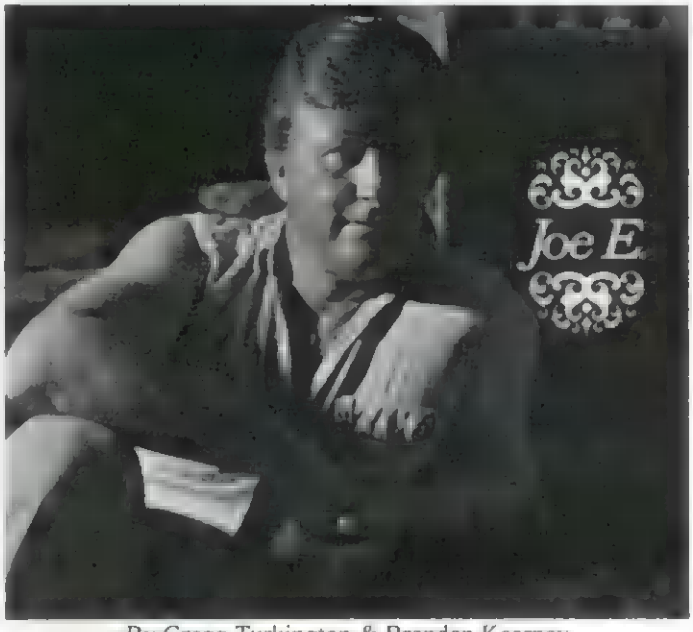
Cake On Cake – One Woman Swedish orchestra!

Cannot [illegible] Stopped – The D.C.-based One Man Band Wonder Boy plays [illegible] trigger-based drum kit and weird funky electronics.









By Gregg Turkington & Brandan Kearney

The mid-seventies were the tail end of an era in which any independent label could score a Top 10 hit. In those days, pop radio played an amazingly eclectic mix of rock, soul, disco, country, and novelty material. Anyone with a good voice, or a catchy song, could become a household name overnight.

Joe E. Neubauer was a South Florida construction worker and part-time stock car racer who'd grown up listening to singers who came out of nowhere and took the charts by storm. He was interested in singing from an early age. In the fifties, when Joe was a teenager, his parents tried to get him some musical training by setting up a meeting with "Preacher Rollo" Laylan, an eccentric jazz drummer who'd worked with Paul Whiteman and Bunny Berigan. Unfortunately, Joe never showed up.

"I didn't make it because I was too scared…I just kind of backed down. Later on I thought to myself, 'I wish I'd have gone.'"

Joe later went into the service. When he returned to civilian life, he puta band together and began performing in Holiday Inn, Howard Johnsons' and Ramada Inn lounges in Deerfield and Fort Lauderdale. The group went through various name changes — the Country Crickets, the Brothers-In-Law, the Southern Sounds, the Images — and played energetic sets featuring Tom Jones covers, country and western hits, and plenty of Elvis. Soon, Joe decided he wanted to take things a step further, and started looking for a studio.

He found one a few miles away, in Fort Lauderdale. Started by Michele Scott and Dave Chiodo in 1967, SRS International had become one of the busiest independent studios in south Florida. It recorded music in all styles, as well as radio station IDs and commercials, and even some obscure movie soundtracks. (Their promo materials also discuss a series of albums—which remain unearthed, to date—devoted to the "stories and songs of individuals who have traveled from one time to another and remember the journey.")

With ties to Chet Atkins, clients that included Mickey Rooney, and over 200 hundred completed albums to their credit — many of which were released by their in-house label, Soul Deep Records — SRS seemed very well connected. And they also seemed eager to produce a hit record for Joe. After talking it over, Joe and his supportive dad decided to put up $20,000 for a chance at stardom.

In April of 1974, Joe signed a contract with SRS, essentially hiring them to "produce one record album including all musicians, studio facilities, tape stock, and to select all songs to be recorded." The contract also called for SRS "to use all its resources in attempting to secure placement for this album with a major label or distributor," and to provide Joe with 1,000 copies of the album for promotional use. To their credit, SRS's contract explicitly gave Joe full ownership of the production after completion.

SRS swiftly jettisoned Joe's regular crew of musicians in favor of their own in-house band, and insisted that Joe's record would have a fighting chance only if it contained original material. Accordingly, they supplied him with publishers' demos, including an upbeat, mildly risque soul number entitled "Come On Sign." It was by Wayne Carson, an associate of theirs who'd previously written "The Letter" for The Box Tops, among other hits. Joe was told to take the songs home and learn them.

Joe laid down his vocals over the course of a few days, singing over a minimal backing track. A very short time later, Joe was amazed to find that his completed and pressed album included elaborate horn and string arrangements (played by moonlighters from the Miami Symphony) and the haunting backing vocals of "The Michelle Scott Singers" (which comprised SRS president Michelle and her daughter, overdubbed multiple times). "I was very, very happy with it," Joe says. "They definitely earned their money."

This initial pressing was titled *Come On Sign,* and credited to Joe E. Neubauer. It had a typical custom-pressing stock cover, with Joe's signature overprinted in silver ink. As promised, Joe received 1,000 copies.

A year or so later, SRS issued a second pressing. Retitled *Love Got In My Way*, it sported a new cover photo, and an extended version of the title track, and was credited simply to "Joe E." Graced with beautifully awkward liner notes that insist on "the difference between loneliness and being lonely" without ever quite explaining it, this second pressing was distributed exclusively via promo mailings.

The folks at SRS regaled Joe with reports of positive response from radio, and hints of future chart action. When Joe asked them what the next step would be, he was astonished to learn that they wanted to fly him to England.

"I was just flabbergasted. They said 'That's where you want to start. You'll get the best reviews over there and that's what we gota do.'"

Shortly before the trip was to begin, Joe dropped by SRS headquarters and got the shock of his life.

"The doors were locked and all I could do was bang on the door. I went next door to a welding shop, and I asked them what was going on."

To his dismay, he learned that SRS had packed up and left suddenly under cover of night.

"The guys at the welding shop knew that they were moving because they saw trucks out there. They'd never seen someone move so fast in their lives, and they were throwing things in the dumpster. So I looked through it — and found my tapes."

Joe pulled his master tapes out of the garbage and took them home, feeling absolutely crushed. He soon returned to the construction business, abandoning not just his hopes for the album, but also his performing career.

As disappointing as SRS's sudden disappearance may have been, it's hard to believe that any other small label of that era could've created such an inventive and engaging setting for Joe's voice. You can't deny the eerily affecting quality of Michelle Scott's production, or her ability to choose material that's perfectly suited to the darker, deeper side of Joe's emotional range. Many of the songs project an almost cosmic sadness, thanks to Joe's mournful voice, soaked in hisbeloved echo, and the distant, glacial female chorus that drifts through the song like clouds across the moon.

Taken as a whole, the album suggests nothing less than a poor man's Elvis taking aim at a *Pet Sounds* for the middle-aged melancholic, and coming up with a masterpiece that, to borrow a phrase from Theodor Adorno, comprises "a kind of training for life when things have gone wrong."

With the cooperation and blessing of Joe E himself, Eabla Recordings has remastered Love Got In My Way *from the original tapes, and released it as a deluxe, limited CD complete with incredible archival photos. The text above was adapted from the liner notes. For more information (including samples from the album and some of Joe's more*

recent material), visit www.eabla.com. The following interview is one of several we conducted with Joe in 2007, while trying to piece together the curious tale of how his album came to be.

So you've lived in Florida your whole life?

From age 13.

Where were you born?

New Jersey. I don't tell many people that. Morristown, New Jersey. It's a wealthy town. I was the only one that wasn't wealthy there.

How old were you when you made this album?

It was in '75...35.

How did you hook up with the Soul Deep label? Did they approach you or did you find them?

That was through SRS International Recording Studios. I went there to make a record for myself and we ended up making an album and they ended up wanting to push it. They were the ones who found the label. I don't even know if it was their label.

Oh, it is definitely theirs. That was SRS International's in-house label. Did they say it was an outside label?

I don't know. I was just so happy that we were able to do what we did. I wasn't even looking to see what label or anything was on it.

So you were just recording stuff for yourself, and then they suggested you work with them on it? When did they come up with this $20,000 scheme?

My dad was involved in that. He said that he would go ahead and loan me the money to do it. So he talked to them, and they talked him into making an album, and they would push it as far as they could push it. That's the way I understood it. He loaned us the money, and we gave it to them, and they ran with it.

Had you ever sung any of those songs before?

No. They just got them from a publisher's demo. They picked them out, got with me and had me learn them. I practiced on it until we finally got it, and then went there and started taping them.

How long did it take to get comfortable with those songs?

A couple of them were very easy, like "Table For Two For One." I'd say maybe about a week before I felt comfortable. But the way that they went about it, I didn't feel as comfortable as I should have, to begin with. I was tight, you know.

You don't sound tight. You sound pretty relaxed.

I don't know. When you are playing and there's no music in the background, and you're singing, it's kind of hard to sing to a guitar and try to get some sound out of it. That's all I could hear was my voice and a little bit of music in the background. It didn't sound that good to me at all. Not until it came out on the record, and then it was all the difference in the world.

So when you recorded your vocal tracks, it was just a guitarist and you singing?

Yes, they might have put something else in it...a set of drums in the background, playing light. It wasn't very much. Not enough to where you could really loosen up and put a little extra to it.

I think you put a LOT of extra to it.

I felt I was missing something. I felt I could have done better.

I can't image how much better you could have done 'cause it sure sounds good to me. You sound like you really connect with those songs. How many takes did you do?

"Come On Sign," the beginning of that was hard...about three takes on that one. And the rest of them a couple of takes, and a few that went through with one shot.

So when you were doing the record, did you hear any songs you thought had potential to be hits?

"Love Got In The Way" was the one at the time that I really felt impressed with, comfortable with it all, because it's kind of a country-type song. They call it "middle of the road." It seemed to me on the country side. I felt very comfortable with that.

Did they piece together any of the tracks from different vocal takes or did they just let the tape roll?

They let it roll, but then they had to go back when I was off key and fill that in. They'd bring it up to a certain place where we had to start again, and they'd cut it back in.

Were there any songs that you recorded that didn't end up on the album or rehearsed that you didn't use?

No, there were ten of them and that's what we ended up with. We just kept plugging them and got them all done and that was it.

The arrangements and the production and all that sound fantastic.

I would imagine Michelle was the one who did that part. She was pretty smart. Smart enough to outsmart me!

Did you meet any of the other acts that they worked with?

No, they'd come and go. They had schedules set up for everybody and I'd see them. I might be in the next room and hear somebody singing.

So that was a pretty busy recording studio?

Yeah, they had Mickey Rooney in there and there was another guy called Earl Nightingale. He was a guy that was on at nighttime on a talk radio show, and they took care of him. Mickey Rooney was the only one I knew of that they were handling that had any name factor to it.

How long after you put down your vocals did you hear a version with the full band?

Maybe wasn't more than a week. It was quick.

Do you know why they did the two different covers and which one came first?

The *Come On Sign* with the red burst on it was the first one. It caught my eye. It just stuck right out there and I thought that was great. And then we were going to change because I liked the other song, "Love Got In The Way." Since we were doing that on the lead song, they went ahead and made the album with the picture and I think at that time, they changed it to *Love Got In My Way*. That's what they did, but they didn't make too many copies. I could be wrong, they might have made 1000 copies, but I can't remember more than a hundred. I said, "Can I get some air time on this down here in south Florida?" And they said, "No,

not in south Florida. Don't even try." That's what they said. I never carried it anywhere South. Now that I think back now, after they left me in a jam like this, there must have been something shady going on there. I know I got some air time in north Florida, but nothing down here in the south part, because they told me not to push it. I didn't ask any questions because I was trying not to turn over any rocks. So I just kind of let it go.

Did they give you any input into the packaging or design, or the order of songs on the record?

No, I let them carry the ball on most of it. I told them it looks great. They were doing a great job

Did they decide on shortening your name on the second version of the record to just Joe E. and not having your last name?

I just wanted to go in with just Joe E, because the name "Neubauer" was to me a little bit too long and didn't fit the music era for me. I just didn't feel it set where Joe E would. It's like it used to be, Tommy D and the whatevers.

Did you perform the songs from the record live after it came out?

No, because it was too complicated, because it had all the strings and horns and all that stuff on it. You're up there with just the guitar, the drums, the bass...I didn't think it would work.

Did you ever discuss with Dave and Michelle what would happen if the record took off?

Yeah, we did. That's when they told me, "Well what we've gotta do—our first step—is get priming for England. This was a shock to me. They said there was a lot of money to be made. That was the main conversation. And it wasn't long after that when they went away and left me hanging.

Were they going to pay for you to go to England, or were you going to have to pay for that?

Pay didn't come up, I assumed that they were going to take that out of the $20,000—or at least part of it would come out of that—because I didn't know what it cost to make an album. So I thought it must be at least ten thousand to get us there and back, and whatever money we'd make while we were there would pay for whatever else to get started. I don't know how they operate so I didn't really get into it.

But soon after these conversations, you showed up at the office and found the place vacant, and your master tapes in the garbage.

You are correct. About a month afterwards. We were talking England and the next thing I know, I found out that they weren't there any more. They couldn't have been gone too long, or the garbage would have been taken away already. I found a couple of my tapes and a few more off the wall—a few I never knew. And the publishing demo of Wayne Carson, I found that in there also. And some tapes of Mickey Rooney. I think we sent those back to him. [Writer's note: Mickey Rooney did indeed self release an album entitled *Merry, Merry Micklemas*, recorded at SRS International Studios in Florida.]

Did you keep playing?

I think we did a couple more gigs after that, but not much. I had to get back into the construction and not devote too much time to that. And I had just given all my tools away! We were getting ready to go to England and I had thought I was never going to do construction again. And when I found out what happened, I had to buy all those tools again.

Did you try hunting the SRS folks down?

I didn't know where to look at that point. They were from Tennessee or Alabama. Michelle knew Chet Atkins. Wherever he was, she was.

Chet Atkins was involved in this label somehow?

Yeah. I don't know how. All I know is he was involved. That's what she said, and you don't ask questions when things are going your way. You think, *this is great, let him be in there, maybe I'll get to meet him* Which I didn't. Never even spoke with him.

Did you ever have any premonition that something was not quite right in your dealings with SRS?

I thought everything was going perfect until I found out that they had left town. That's all it took and my heart fell to the floor. I lost everything I thought I had.

What have you been doing since this album came out? You mentioned construction.

I got back into that. It's boring, the same thing day in and day out. But it's what I do, so it's what I stuck with.

Was there ever any talk about doing a 45 single of any of the songs off this record?

No. But I know I made a 45 for somebody called "Bahama Mama." Somebody wanted their song put on a record. Michelle and Dave didn't have anyone to sing it, and I was available at the time and I said "sure." They just said "here are the words, here's the tune." I don't remember if I even practiced it…it was so simple, like a fifties-type song. They all sound the same! It came out pretty nice. I never got a copy of it, though.

Did it come out under your name?

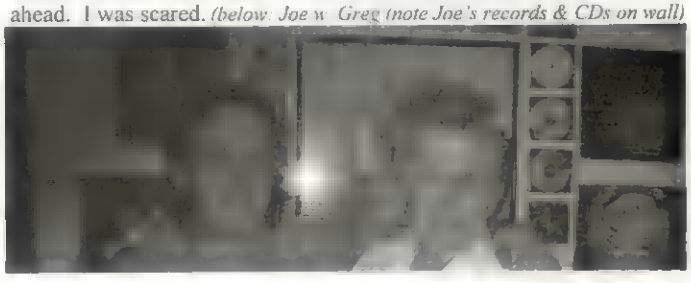
I don't know. I never even saw the record.

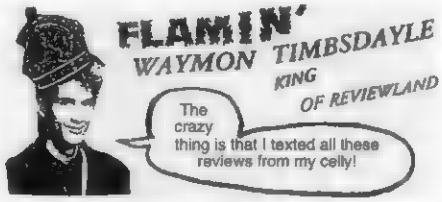
Do you think they charged that person money to have that record made?

I think they might have…I never heard another word about it. It was one of those in-and-out deals. It was a jumpy-type song. It was pretty neat. I wish I had the words and the melody today…I'd put them together just for the heck of it. But I don't remember it.

And that was the only other record you ever made then?

Yeah. Since then I'm in the process of trying to make my Christmas record for the family and once I get that together I'll send that out. I've got some other stuff that I've done—Elvis-type imitations—which doesn't get you far today. Back then if I'd done them with Preacher Rollo, I'd have been ahead of Elvis, but I wasn't smart enough to think ahead. I was scared. *(below: Joe w. Greg (note Joe's records & CDs on wall)*





MUSIC REVIEWS

Absentee "Victory Shorts" (Memphis-industries.com) You know those jokes about stoners who think they are getting pulled over for speeding but are informed by the officer that they were driving six miles an hour...well I bet life and love have done such a number on this dude (who is singing with a lazy, detached drawl that sounds like Droopy Dog on barbiturates) that he thinks he is jamming and shouting like Wayne Cochran. And he is!

Adrenalin O.D. "The Wacky Hi-Jinks of..." (chunksaah.com) Not to be totally dickish, but I never really want to get a retrospective CD of an old punk band that is actually ■ real retrospective, including regrettable crossover late-era material and 2006 reunion tour recordings. Thus, I am thrilled with this two disc set honoring New Jersey's greatest intentionally jokey punk band (Misfits don't count, Jerry and Doyle didn't know they were funny – I think Glen might have known at first, but has since forgot). This wisely includes nothing recorded after 1986. The band's hilarious debut is presented all polished up on disc one, and disc two has all the early singles, comp tracks, and a live radio show. My only complaint is that considering how fast, furious, and reckless this awesome band played I'd expect more than 48 songs to fit on two discs. But shit, I'll just play "Trans Am" and "Paul's Not Home" 10 times each and then it's 64 tracks. All you kids need this genuinely funny, seriously rocking CD.

Ahmond "a boy you once knew" (myspace.com /ahmondband) Ahmond = joy!

Airiel "The Battle of Seala ND" (Highwheel) Should be called Areola because this genius future pop band is the tits!

Shane Alexander "The Sky Below" (Buddhaland) Warning: women should not listen to this unless they are prepared to feel compelled to make love to Shane Alexander.

Amadan "(pacifica)~n." (EIVE Oaks) I amadam fool for Irish-y Americana with college-ish indie cleverness.

Brent Amaker and the Rodeo "Howdy Doo" (Gravewax) This CD is the audio equivalent of the best cowboy costume you have ever seen on Halloween. The *best* one. *Ever*.

American Astronaut "Reno" (americanastronaut.com) Country & Western music for cowboys of the Road Warrior future.

Drew Andrews "Only Mirrors" (Minty Fresh, mintyfresh.com) Drew me into somnambulance.

Anew Revolution "Rise" (Koch) Xtreme thug rock that wants to beat you up!

Another Saturday Night "Giants of Love" b/w "Sidewalkin'" (Slow Gold Zebra, POB 20506 Tompkins Sq Sta. NYC 10009) Lite-on-the-glam "Downtown" bowery rock that falls somewhere between New York Dolls and Lenny and the Squigtones. Makes you wish Saturday would last several nights (at least til Wednesday).

ANTiSEEN "The Best Of..." (TKO, tkorecords.com) Though they seem to have as many retrospective releases as KISS, basically one cannot pay to much homage and pray enough at the altar of this amazing music monolith. Forty tracks of brutality that champions white trash rage without any irony (yet with plenty of humor). Arranged chronologically, these tracks demonstrate an amazing power and flavor that never diminishes over a two decade-plus span. I am more PRoSEEN than ever!

The Anxieties "The Next Mutation" (Lab Rat Indistries, labratindustries.com) Anxieterrific! Silly but awesome new wave punk that made me pogo shamelessly (well, maybe that's impossible, but with minimal shame).

The Archies "Greatest Hits-Sugar Sugar" (Goldenlane -Bootleg) I don't know who came up with this idea, but someone's been putting out these LP packages of mostly punk, or related, icons. Each LP is pressed on colored vinyl, and comes with ■ patch and a button. So far, I've seen one on Johnny Thunders and The Heartbreakers (on hot pink vinyl. Had to have it, even though there's no really rare stuff on it) on "Jungle" records (Johnny's actual reissue label. They must be pissed), and there's some on Motorhead (the same early "Iron Fist and The Hordes of Hell" show that's been reissued quarterly since Thatcher took office), and a really nice looking T-Rex package, which isn't T-Rex at all, but the early Marc Bolan stuff that's been reissued to death. There's also one on the Damned from around 1985, when they almost broke the states...so imagine my surprise, The Archies getting the same treatment! This gold vinyl LP bears the same cool artwork as the original Greatest Hits package. Good thing, too, as the only copy I've seen in years had a major chunk missing from the record! This LP is ■ compilation of several LP and single tracks. They picked some really good ones, but if I were The Mr. Weatherbee at THIS High School, I wouldn't have let them overlook the near-Garage Punk of the name-droppin' "Waldo P. Emerson Jones" (with the classic line: "Rode his chopper up to Woodstock, and he wormed his way backstage/Well, he says he knows The Beatles, S & G *(Simon and Garfunkel)* and JIMMY PAGE!"). Still, there's some great songs here, particularly the Tex-Mex Bubblegum (Chicle?) of "Over and Over," the sexy hit song "Jingle Jangle" with boss Archies singer/songwriter Ron Dante, trading off vocal innuendos with Toni Wine, with whom Dante worked extensively. Now, I read in Bubblegum Music is The Naked Truth, a must-read, that this song is about oral sex from the Woman's vantage point. Sometimes it's better to receive. Of course, "Sugar, Sugar" is there, too, in it's original state and as a remix (Now, I HATE those things, but this isn't too bad...Do I need to own it? no.) "Bang Shang ■ Lang," too, was ■ big hit, of course. I used to love hearing it on the radio in my Mom's car when I was about five. Bubblegum music was slagged by "serious" musicians and critics, because it was aimed at children. Not very many people are laughing today, as Kiddie Rock is a multigodzillion dollar industry. "Kissin'" is probably the mushiest song on here. It reads more like a True Romance comic book than "Archie," but, I still have a soft spot in my spot for it, mainly, because it's so obviously derived from Buddy Holly's "Love's Made a Fool of You." "You Little Angel, You," too, is a slight break from character, with a upbeat Doo-Wop pattern, and even ■ few Beach Boys "Oooo-weee-ooooo's," not to mention, a short, but scorchin' guitar solo thrown in for good measure. "Hot Dog" also borders on Garage Punk, and is laden with naughty double entendres ("Put some mustard on my roll, now you're barkin' up my soul!"). "Melody Hill" has a really screamin' fuzztone guitar, though, understandably, it is overshadowed by Dante's outstanding Pop vocals. This collection doesn't sound perfect, but it sounds better than my beat up LPs or the crap CD reissues also done without permission. The Archies' LPs deserve a proper CD reissue, but, I doubt that'll ever happen. Anyway, if I've convinced anyone, here, that The Archies were not just a prefab one-trick pony, but, rather, the prime purveyors of The GUM this side of Kasenetz/Katz, and worthy of your attention...then, my work, here, is done.

Arden of Eden "love street" (ardenofeden.com) Pass the apple, I gotta get outta here.

Arriba La Cumbia! (Crammed) Not ■ historical compilation of traditional Columbian Cumbia, this is a hysterical compilation of international dance music mania with Cumbia-nic roots. There is no disco, house party, or car stereo that will not appreciate these grooves, and the only thing that could make this better is an *arepa* full of *chorizo*!

A Static Lullaby "Rattlesnake!" (Fearless) A sonic venomstorm!

The Asteroids Galaxy Tour "Around the Bend" ep (Small Giants) Kicked my Asteroids! These Copenhagenites have concentrated "cool" to bullion cube density!

Azita "How Will You" (Drag City) Azita's voice isn't so much haunting as possessing – she makes you feel like a ghost has just gone all through your body and had its way with you. Torch song singing drag divas wish they could capture this vibe but they never will, because Azita is camp free and irony free and goof free on this genuinely strange and truly beautiful platter.

Banner Pilot "Resignation Day" (Go Kart, gokartrecords.com) Ban-tastic!

The Barbary Coasters "Hark! Tidings of Barbary Joy" (Hillsdale) Finally! After decades without ■ new Christmas standard these surfy swingy 60s popsters have come up with "I Want A Monkey For Christmas." Now if we can just teach children's choirs to sing that hot guitar solo... Anyhow, this is by far my fave X-mas album of the year, and I love this band more than I love Rudolph. Guiliani.

Batman and Robin "I'm A Bat" EP (Bachelorrecords.com) Trashy garage magic that actually is about Batman, if Batman was a Headcoats fan, and drank. Holy shit, Batman, this is fucking great!

Begushkin "King's Curse" (locustmusic.com) Prog-tastic Beefheat attacks with the kind of lyrics you would expect a crazy-eyed street person to hand to you on a single spaced kook manifesto.

Jorge Ben "s/t" (Dusty Groove, dustygroove.com) Listening to this no frills reissue of a beloved mildly funky samba classic is hard to do without smiling and grooving. Ben's gentle lilting voice and sweet guitar playing likely sounds cheesy to Brazilian hipsters, but even with the super slick loungey production on most of these numbers this just sounds like magic to my Big Mac nourished earholes. This reminds me of 70s Sammy Davis Jr. at times, with Ben selling the groovy tracks with vocals that are so professional and showbiz savvy that he clearly wants everyone to love this. And everyone should.

The Besties "Home Free" (hugpatch.com) The Average-ies.

Big Attack "Single Double" (M267) Better than ■ Big Mac Attack.

Birdwatchers of America "There Have Been Sightings" (raise giant frogs) An avian flu wave of awesomeness!

Sam Bisbee "Son of a Math Teacher" (Le Grand Magistery, magistery.com) The math teacher should put out ■ CD called "Parent of a Fucking Genius!"

Bison "B.C. Quiet Earth" (Metal Blade) Like a buffalo sat on your head and your crushed brain and the bison meat became one. Heavier than a herd.

Black Orphan "XX Spectrum" EP (UFO Dictator) 5th dimensional nightmare robot punk so distorted it comes around again to being torted. Now I know why all those rich mommies at the playground adopted Chinese orphans...those Black ones are scary!

Black Time "Double Negative" (In The Red) My first embarrassing confession is that I listened to this record three times through completely baffled how a wholesome garage party band could become the menacing, evil, noisy trash rock monster unit barely captured in these grooves. Than I realized I was confusing them with labelmates Cheap Time. Second embarrassing confession: this record made me shit my pants.

Blowfly "Live at the Platypussery" (Steel Cage, steelcagerecords.com) Every night before he goes to bed Blowfly gets on his knees and prays, thanking the Good Lord in Heaven, because he blessed Blowfly by allowing, in his infinite wisdom, the word "fuck" to rhyme with the word "suck."

Boggie "seeing angels" (boggie.net) The golden-voiced Boggie boggles the mind with her lovely singer-songwriter ways that combines the universality of Carole King pop and the intimacy of a piano bar chanteuse.

Bon Vivants "Black Honey" (Gulcher) Bon Vivexcellent! Sparely full on kick ■■ raw rock that's elegant even as it's kind of brutal.

Born From Pain "Survival" (Metal Blade) Crossover thrash style metal with genuine desperation and urgency making the pain feel s-o-o-o good.

Brans "Brands" (SoMuchSoul) A futuristic version of that surfer who sings about Curious George.

Brother JT3 "Jelly Roll Gospel" (Drag City) Finally some psyche rock that foregoes freak folk (or is it phreak pholk) and just lays some serious garage bar rock psyche that is way interested in rock and groove (and apparently, bong hits). Brother where art thou been?

Stacy Lloyd Brown "Automatic EP!" (Youth Club) The futuristic Bob Dylan if Daniel Johnston impersonators.

The Buttless Chaps "Cartography" (Mint, mintrecs.com) The BESTest Chaps. Regressively futuristic New Wave punk awesomeness that does more with no butts than you could do with two!

Jared Campbell "Beyond the Gray" (jaredcampbell.com) Like his soup namesake, this is delicious and hot! Poppy singer song stuff that sounds like teenagers on some TV show should be having romantic drama with this in the background, and then stop the scene and break the 4th wall by declaring, "Hey, these songs are too good to be on this crappy show!"

Camp X-Ray "S.A.D.S.U." EP (Twistworthy.com) I wish I had bought this single at ■ show because you can tell this post-punk band rocks the fuck out of ■ stage. Howling powerful scrambly-drummed super rock!

Cars Can Be Blue "Doubly Unbeatable" (HHBTM, hhbtm.com) Wicked indie pop! Like 1992-2008 never happened!

Chewbacca All Stars "Do The Chew.B.A.C.C.A." b/w "Go Back Home" (442eme Rue) High class trash rock that made me shave and put on a sharp suit before dancing until I vomited. On my sharp suit.

Child Bite "Fantastic Gusts of Blood" (Suburban Sprawl) Sounds like the child that bit him was a rabid mongoose child and these frantic no wave blurtations are the results of disease and degeneration that hopefully will not be trwated until they record at least ten more albums.

Chop Chop "Screens" (archenemy.com) Fittingly, the phrase "chop chop" is usually used when you want someone to pick up the tempo, thus making it easy to point out what's irksome about this molasses paced pop act when writing a shallow, pretend clever capsule review. Making this the boldest band naming choice since "Throw That Beat In the Garbage Can."

Cock Sparrer "True to Yourself" b/w "Chip On My Shoulder" (TKO, tkorecords.com) Hmm...is this their techn o record, or maybe ■ stab ■ emo, or perhaos they wen't hip hop? No...it's *Oi!* Boyeee! It is as *Oi!*-ish as *Oi!* can *Oi!* The most welcome musical boot to the head you will hear all year!

Coconut "Cosa Astral" (BCore) Tropacalia-esque ambient art magic that made me coo coo for Coconut!

Condo "Best of Luck" (Rock Park, rockparkrecords.com) Should be called "Condom," because this is *fucking* great!

Cooler By The Lake "Welcome To The Battle" b/w "A Battle Of My Own" (rorylakepresents.com) Majestic combat hymns with grit...and *heart!*

Gal Costa "Gal" (Dusty Groove, dustygroove.com) Obviously there are Brasilophiles and the Tropicalia equivalent of Deadheads (not to mention anyone who has Dusty Groove tattoo) who know way more about this stuff than I ever could, but let me just state emphatically that this is the most out there, batshit crazy, psychedelic freakout Brazillian record I've ever heard. Super tough vocals over the work of all star composers (Velosa, Gil, Ben) make up a genuinely powerful work. If I knew anything about what was going on in Brazilian politics and culture in 1969 I would definitely be convinced to agree with whatever her position was. That is, I would be, if in fact knew Portuguese. Basically, I'm an idiot, and this record is awesome.

Creech Holler "The Shovel and the Gun" (bucketcity.com) Possibly the creechiest music I've heard all year. It creeched me out! And I love this weird pseudo-rural swamp hymnal offering so much that they are creeching to the choir!

Jeff Dahl "Back to Monkey City" (Steel Cage, steelcagerecords.com) !an fucking alive! This is what you want everytime you listen to anything! Just the purest, dumbest, best rock n roll conceivable. If that ain't punk, you can kiss the David Allan Coe of punk's ass!

Daily Void/O Voids split single (DHRR) Daily Void make musical standards null and void but O-Voids perhaps should be O-voided.

Alexis Dallman "The Most Class..." (myspace.cpm/adsixx) She is the luxury auto of sexy singer songwriters, so she should change her name to A Lexus.

Jenny Dalton "Rusalka's Umbrella" (glossyshoebox.com) She should be accompanied by a harp because that's the voice of an angel!

Davilla 666 (In The Red, intheredrecords.com) I am baffled as to what this masterpiece actually is, but it sounds like these Puerto Rican noisemakers just invented rock n roll, or as they might say in their native language, rock y roll (or maybe rock ñ roll).

Dax "Overnight Sensation" (Haight Rite) Dax-tacular! Dax 'n Roll All Night and Party Every Dax!

The Dead Betties "This Is My Brain on Drugs" (deadbetties.com) No bad ditties for these Dead Betties! Strange art punk that makes you want to rock..yet think at the same time.

Deadly Sins "Selling Our Weaknesses" (durtykickrecords.com) This sounds like bar rock for a stadium sized bar. Big, moving anthem punk with tough but sultry vocals.

Dead To Me "Little Brother" (Fat) Just call me "Fast Hooker" because I like my music fast and hooky, and on this EP (and moreso on their previous CD) these punks shine their skills when they get it upbeat (especially when they do it when singing about some miserable stuff). Do they slip into some kinda reggae thing for ■■ reason ever? Hey, who of us doesn't?

The Dears "Missles" (dangerbirdrecords.com) Were they in my headlights I might not swerve.

Death "...For the Whole World to See" (Drag City) One of the great lost black punk bands, these brothers (as in siblings) from Detroit put out some ridiculously collectible vinyl which you can't afford (unless Bill Gates began reading this magazine again) and then disappeared, moving East to become a Reggae band. A good amount of mystery remains, as this release features only handwritten lyrics and only a single awesome photo, but no biographical info. But it does contain awesome music that is at last easily available, and it's better than expected. Because only insane punk collectors pay $700 for a single some of the lukewarm reviews of their songs that have circulated come from punk purists. The black punk history section of our own website describes their b-side "Politicians In My Eyes" as "wanky but not horrible," which is grossly unfair after hearing it, and a half dozen other gems, on this collection. That tune, with amazing stuttering bass, cryptically political lyrics, and fantastic vocals, kicks ass. In fact, these dudes likely sit funny with punkers because they are such straightforward rockers; I was under the impression that this record was from 1976, the press release suggests it was done around 1973, and the CD has some handwritten scribblings saying everything was written in 1974, so I'm still not sure when this tracks were recorded (done with the help of Funkadelic producer Don Davis, by the way). But given the range of dates, my point is, you can't blame a pre-punk group for not being punk, and they sure had done ■ good job listening to heavy Michigan pre-punkers like the Stooges, MC5 and Alice Cooper Group, and they must have dug some

hard glam from across the pond as well, as pseudo English phrasing emerges at times. Basically this is a pretty damn solid piece of American proto-punk and you would be silly to pass it by. Get some Death!

Darren Deicide "Jersey Devil" (Ever Reviled, everreviledrecords.com) Though this babyfaced bluesman may look a bit like Ralph Macchio in *Crossroads* the fact is that there's no minstrel old black man impersonation in Deicide's voice – just conviction and menace that's not so much betrayed by his youthful voice but transformed into punk rock by it.

Palmyra Delran "She Digs the Ride" (palmydradelran.com) Fifteen minutes of Friggin' awesome garage/surf/rock n roll/pop rave ups that I dug and rode over and over!

Destination:Oblivion "The Bridge To No Where" (destinationoblivion.net) Monster rock made by actual monsters! Wait, those songs were about Jesus and Judas, not vampires and zombies? Well still kinda monstery.

Destructors 666 "Malleus Maleficarum" (RF), "Bah Humbug" (RF). **Destructors 666/Ruined/Punky Rebel Media** split CD. **Destructors 666/March to the Grave** split CD (888) Not sure what exactly Destructors 666's business plan is, but every year they seem to release 10 CDs of amazing pub punk, seemingly partially financed by splitting costs with tons of often lesser bands playing far less timeless rock n roll. However, the bands they team up with here (especially March to the Grave) are definitely pretty decent. But hearing a full length with no other bands is nice (especially since it's all all witch theme record, including covers of the Sonics, the Sweet and the Muchkins) or a nasty X-mas album.

Angela Desveaux "The Mighty Ship" (Thrill Jockey) When it comes to airy, emotional country pop with ■ touch of yearning and an intriguing balance between lush production and traditional instrumentation, Angela steals the sheaux!

Dictators "Every Day is Saturday" (Norton) I finally found this Double Slider with cheese, and boy is it fun. It may not make them many new fans, but as ■ present to their loyal fans, this baby stands tall...It stands proud, it am what it am. Hard to find single sides and compilation tracks rub shoulders with demos dating back as far as 1973, plus there's some choice Rock Radio ads for their records and gigs ("See The Dictators for one dollar. First 300 people get a free copy of their new album!" At least, in the 70s, when we were in a recession, people ACTED like we were). The liner notes are a book in themselves, and had me asking myself, "Where did I put my copy of the new Creem Magazine book?" Amidst the tales dating back to the group's inception are some jaw-dropping photos and early ads. Imagine a bill like The New York Dolls, The Dictators and Joey Ramone's first band, Sniper, or Mink De Ville, Walter Lure's Demons, and Blondie at the bottom of the bill to The Dictators, and get an eyefull of Handsome Dick hangin' with Henny Youngman AND Muddy Waters! The earliest tracks, from 1973, finds a band whose debut was two years down the pike pretty much fully formed and ready to jump-start The Punk Rock movement. "Weekend," "Master Race Rock" and "California Sun" aren't radically different from the versions that eventually made it to vinyl, though of course, more stripped down and Manitoba-free. This was a band whose time had yet to come, but who already knew what their purpose was here on the planet. Their heroes, The MC5, had just recently called it ■ day. The Stooges had just released their final album (I mean, of "The Big Three"). The Dolls, whom the 'Tators reportedly did not have a very good relationship with (but, they're cool, now) seemed like "The Next Big Thing" at that, but would implode in two years' time. "Who Will Save Rock n' Roll?," indeed? Two unreleased, and very strong, tracks, make their debut, here, "Backseat Boogie," the missing link between Status Quo and Eddie and The Hot Rods, and "Fireman's Friend," a charging rhino of a rocker, highlighting Shernoff's fiery leads which alternately recall Johnny Thunders and Wayne Kramer at their best (or what you wished Gang War would've sounded like, tho' I still like 'em). The song itself is based on, what else, an episode of *The Adventures of Superman*. I can just see George Reeves, alive and well, tracking down the bad guys with his X-Ray vision, then bursting through a brick wall to the strains of "SUPA-SUPE-SUPERMAAAAAN," which sounds more than a little like The Kinks' ode to the same icon, except theirs came out ■ good four years later! From there, The Dictators perform "America The Beautiful" like they MEAN IT, MAAN. Any irony, here, is lost on me. From there, we have one demo from their largely maligned second LP, "Sleeping With The T.V. On," and, while it's a departure from the heavyweight protopunk delivered elsewhere, you gotta love a guy who sings of feeling unloved and forlorn while crashing out, drunk, in front of the T.V. set, trying to make it through *The Thin Man*. A true romantic. The Dictators' Return-to-Form album, the ruthless and infectous "Blood Brothers," is well represented here with eight savage, unrelenting demos. The rumored to not even exist original version of "16 Forever" appears here, along with a 2002 remake. Very little has changed. That's why we love 'em so. Among other rare treats are "Loyola" (apparently a girl's name, and not a University of that name). The song appeared on "Fuck 'Em If They Can't Take a Joke," their live ROIR cassette, but wouldn't see a proper studio release until some 15 years later, At any rate, it's a great, melodic rocker, about a spoiled brat teenager, much like "Baby, Let's Twist." The hilarious, Shernoff-sang "What's Up With That?" (version #2) is a nod to Bo Diddley (let's face it, it's "Crackin' Up" given an overhaul for the real age of CRACK-in' up) and Duane Eddy (BIG boss twang!). Make you want to face the day, I ain't lyin'. Finally, The Dictators pay tribute to the band that many people thought had stolen their thunder (But they're no getting out from UNDER the THUNDAH of MANITOBA). Of course, it's no shocker that The Dictators and The Ramones are as tight as Liv Tyler's tuchas, in this life and the next. "Joey's in Heaven, looking down on ■■ all," Manitoba told a crowd in Dallas, right after Joey left his body, but not our hearts. "I Just Wanna Have Something To Do " carries on in the ■■■ hard n' heavy vibe that propelled the original into, arguably, the greatest scene in "Rock n' Roll High School," Not surprisingly, The 'Tators threw in ■ few embellishments, taken directly from "The Next Big Thing," which should surprise absolutely no one. But this album will come as a pleasant surprise to the faithful.

Dillinger Four "Civil War" (Fat) Long overdue new power pop hooks from veteran power pop hookers that have made Minnesota prouder than Jesse the Body, Al Franken and Andre Cymone combined.

The Dirty Blue (thedirtyblue.com) Pop that rocks more than PopRocks, this si the kind of band that you would see in ■ dive bar and wonder why someone this good was playing some dive bar then you'd realize only dive bar patrons appreciate rock this good.

D.O.A. "Northern Avenger" (Sudden Death, suddendeath.com) God, this is great. It may sound like an insult, but D.O.A., with Joey's voice reaching a gruff elder statesman growl, now sounds like one of those imaginary punk bands that 70s and 80s parents and TV producers thought punk bands sounded like. Which is a good thing; it allows the menace to be humorous and makes the serious political stuff more jarring. For all the Republicans who are moving to Canada to flee our new Socialist President, the best band in your new country is D.O.A. Well, on second thought, they may not be for you, maybe check out Celine Dion.

Doctor Sparkles "Monkey Swing Monkey Doo" (doctorsparkles.com) A ukulele wielding anachronist, this is the Tiny Tim for the new Millennium. The good Doctor may be the most profound monkey poop metaphor maker in glitter top hat to ever play ■ trombone.

Dragonette "Galore" (Universal) Cardigans go Electro.

Dreamend "The Long Forgotten Friend" (graveface.com) Though, to paraphrase our next President's most dickish campaign moment, reviewing this thematic work of audio art is, "above my pay scale," I will say, "dude...wow!"

Drumbo "City of Refuge" (Proper) When Drumbo decided to try to reconvene as many non-Don Van Vliet members of Captain Beefheart's Magic band and tour with the drummer/instrumentalist singing Don's vocals the resulting touring band impressed a lot of concertgoers. Inspired by the success, Drumbo began writing new Magic Band-esque material, resulting in this album. While it would be futile to compare his lyrics, composition, and level of weirdness to those of his enigmatic former bandmate's, I will say that these tracks definitely fill any twisted art rock blues jones you might have. Nothing has the undercurrent of menace of the best Beefheart, but everything has the spirit of musical joy the band exuded when they played live (during the good stretches, we've all seen late Magic band videos that seemed a little strained). Contains ■ sentimental sax tribute to John Peel.

Antoine Dufour "Existence" (Candygram) Segovialicious! Acousticulous!

Joe E. "Love Got In My Way" (Eabla, eabla.com) Because this is a reissue of a seemingly absurd vanity press record of a guy who looks like ■ studly lounge singer irony-hounds expecting ■ "so bad it's good" fiasco may find themselves disappointed. Basically, this is ■■ incredibly good record, with Joe's booming vocals falling exactly halfway between Charlie Rich's and Danzig's. Other than the slightly absurd "A Table For Two For One" there is nothing wacky at all: these are profoundly moving, amazingly performed odes to loneliness. Plus, these outstanding productions may cure your irony-addiction.

Edie Sedgwick "Things Are Getting Sinister and Sinisterer" (Dischord) Whoa! This is surprisingly fun and absurd and ridiculous and joie d' vivre and bitchy funny for ■ Dischord release. Infact, it's all those things for any kinda release. There is a make-fun-of-Angelina Jolie song and a nearly bass-free drum and bass tribute to that penguin documentary. This record will make you dance...really strangely.

18th Dye "Amorine Queen" (Crunchy Frog) GREATeenth Dye!

The 88 (Island) This sounds like it's supposed to sound like an awesome lush pop record you will love but it isn't actually an awesome lush pop record you will love, only something that sounds like one.

Electric Touch (Justice) Wicked cool dudes. If this isn't my favorite band then there must be something wrong with me.

El Goodo "Coyote" (Grease) El GREAT-o!

Ellie Maybe Experience "Meet Ellie" (Horse Drawn) A local rock record with actual stellar singing, tight vocal harmonies and superb guitar playing? You guys better go Alt-Country before you get kicked out of the Chicago rock scene for being too talented.

El Ten Eleven "These Promise Are Being Videotaped" (Fake Record Label) Apparently they still do raves somewhere…awesome!

elusive parallelograms "and everything changes" (godaveygo) True mathematics! When super pop sticks its turtle head out from a weird wall of sound-shell, basically you *have* to love that particular turtle head!

The Escape Frame (End Sounds) Emotional pop music that makes you want to hold the awesome singer tightly and tell her everything is going to be all right.

Eulogies "Temted to Do Nothing" (Dangerbird, dangerbirdrecords.com) Shoul be called Cool-ogies! Quietly gigantic music that futurizes the best eighties Anglophilia.

Everest "Ghost notes" (Vapor) This musical mountain makes Wilco sound like a molehill.

Existant "debutante (existantband.com) Exit it.

Feriz Blue "showdown" (ferizblue.com) Sounds like music that would make ferrets blue, but humans extremely excited! Syncoratiosational!

Fires of Rome "You Kingdom You" (The Hours) More hooks than Kareem Abdul-Jabbar!

Fitehouse "a bunch of smelly postcards" (fitehouse.com) Don't know much about this band (never heard the music, only seen comical caricatures of the band members), but every week for the last few months they have sent a comical scratch and sniff postcard, and at this point, who cares about the music…this is my new favorite band. Update: Just got the CD! And it smells awesome!

The Fitt "Hawk Eyes" EP (Big Neck) Holy fuck! This is like having a gasoline tanker, a match factory delivery truck, and a van covered in scratchy match striking material all crash into your head simultaneously!

Flobots "Fight With Tools" (Universal) Anyone who's heard Flobots' hit "Handlebars" has the hook "I can ride my bike with no handlebars, handlebars" bored into their brain. Whether you think it's a goofy string of randomness or, like, totally deep, the song is unusual enough to qualify as a novelty record. Yet what's intriguing is its possible promise. Most groups that debut with a gimmicky single—be they Moon Unit Zappa, LFO or the 1985 Chicago Bears Shuffling Crew—have the courtesy to go away, whether they want to or not. But one in a hundred novelty debuts is a spoonful of sugar easing a genuinely important artist down our collective throats. The jury is still out on "Handlebars," although something hints that this could be the next Beck's "Loser" or Radiohead's "Creep," rather than Aqua's "Barbie Girl" or Elmo & Patsy's "Grandma Got Run Over By ■ Reindeer." The cryptically political rappers have a lot of songs that are better (though less radio-friendly) than their hit. A live-band hip-hop crew with Last Poets–like revolution rhyme schemes and quirkier indie-rock instrumentation than the Roots (a viola player!), these wordy dudes seem like they spilled their poetry thesis into their poli-sci homework after lighting up in their dorm's lounge. Still, that's better than the goatee-stroking backpack affectation and minstrel-show irony gangsterism running rampant in underground rap. And far better than Afroman's "I Got High."

Forever "Punk Start My Heart" (myspace.com/foreverisnow) The missing line between the SF sound of the golden era of getting high and the awesome underground Bay Area hipsters of today. I will listen to this at least forever!

Tom Fuller Band "Abstract Man" (Mesa/Blue Moon/Red Cap) Fuller than a five pound bag filled with ten pounds of awesome! Classic 60s pop/rock that sounds more timeless than old fashioned.

Fun Machine "Sonnehuhn" (BN) I believe inside out prog should be called Proog. This is *wicked* Proog!

Ezra Furman & the Harpoons "inside the human body" (Minty Fresh, mintyfresh.com) Did I make a joke last time about his voice sounding so young he likely is a man who can't grow fur? Well, then maybe I should skip the comedy and get right to the review…this dude is freaking awesome! His incredibly charming music and no frills approach makes we want to move to someplace where it is legal to do so and marry him.

The Gamma Kids/The Saskatchewan Trio split single (Eradicator) Gamma Kds really sound like they are kids – obnoxious, exasperated, looking for trouble kids. I can't tell you if the other band sounds like Saskatchewan, but if the castrate Yetis in that province, than they do.

Ghostwriter "Wreck the City" (End of the West, endofthewest.com) While there are hints at ominous, creepy, menacing One Man Band madness at the corners and fringes of this mighty album, Ghostwriter seems to genuinely transcend the limits of OMB-ism by serving up raw, real C&W that sounds like Chet Atkins' classy crossover strings production never hit Nashville, and the brawling, sprawling nature of surly Southern musicians ▬ allowed to stay pure. How's that for a run on sentence!

girl loves distortion "earth beings on exhibit" (Exxe) Wicked 90s sounding, but without any of the parts of official "alternative rock" that sucked. I love the girl that loves distortion, and to quote Brian Piccolo's best friend Gayle, "I'd like all of you to love him too." But change the "him" to "them."

Graveface Sampler (graveface.com) Best band: Monster Moive. Best band name: Black Mother Super Rainbow. Most trippy treat: "I Am Sewn" by Spires That In The Sunset Rise.

Gregory and the Hawk "Moenie and Kitchi" (Fatcat) Sounds more like a pigeon than a hawk. But a beautiful sensitive pigeon that is good at writing simple, touching lyrics.

Gringo Star "All Yall" (myspace.com /thegringostars) This rocks and rolls! Grin means GO!

David Grubbs "An Optimist Notes the Dusk" (Drag City) Grubbsy, why you harshing my mellow? Not sure what exactly is the theme of this album of spare somber sounding songs topped off by the ever popular 12 minute barely noticeable ambient soundscape that somehow manages to be creepy without actually being audible. But I know it made me sad…you emotional puppetmaster!

GunFight! "Hide Your Empties" (BNS) Shot me full of cool rocking, tuff badassedness. FunFight!

Gutz "Love, Gutz" (BNS) This soulful slice of Brooklyn hipsteria goes down in history as triumphantly the least gay homage to Bowie ever recorded!

GZA "Pro Tools" (babygrande.com) At some point in the early 90s I was at a pro skating demo and because this was a year or two prior to X-Games and the Tony Hawk revival the skaters were completely adverse to ramps and giant stunts, instead doing rail tricks and footwork that were certainly incredibly difficult and insanely impressive to other skaters but the compact moves and effortless cool with which they were doing them made their achievement less than stunning to non-skaters. That is why GZA, an actual hip hop genius (no false advertising here) is underappreciated. He makes his lyrical wizardry seem too easy, almost like he's being lazy, when in fact he's doing twice as much as almost any other MC out there. Granted, the beats on this "official mix tape" don't compare to anything Wu worthy, but the lyrics, delivery, and magic are all here. And if you disagree you can KZA my AZA.

The Gynecologists "Hoosier Psychopaths 1981-1994" (gulcher) There's a smelly, sticky, glorious pit between lamely over-clever Dr. Demento land and classless, misogynist Mentors offensiveness. The Gynos proudly bathed in that pit. That means they make ■ song about the Brady Bunch having an orgy that doesn't have any clever riffs on the theme song or the show's memorable moments, which is actually amazing, and less lame than it would be if it were better. It also features the best Midwest punk John Wayne Gacy song that isn't "Gacy's Place."

Hammerlock "Barefoot & Pregnant" (Steelcagerecords.com) Reissue of a scumrock classic that makes you feel like you got run over by a pickup truck and liked it. Anyone with a gunrack in their vehicle needs to hitch a CD player to it and pump this. On a dozen classic tracks and three bonus updates this band hollers you into submission.

Harry Pussy "You'll Never Play This Town Again" (Load) This rarities/retrospective compilation presents deliciously shrill noise rock that sputters and swirls like evil attacking bumblebees while making you feel guilty about any wrong you ever did to any woman. This will make your stomach and brain ache. In other words: reissue of the year!

Hawnay Troof "Islands of Ayle" (Retard Disco, retarddisco.com) Hawnay dances troof to power! This is the future! Eventually it is, at least.

Her Next Friend "Disaster Casual" (Antipoison) Because this is strangely singular I'm not sure what reference points to use (Kinks? garage pop? Ian Dury?) but I will say that John Burton's oddball vocals and the sweet twang of the guitars in these spare pop nuggets make me wish they were my next friend.

Higgins "Zs" (Serious Business) So much better than Badfinger they should be called Goodfinger!

Hills of Elysium "Cigadent" (hillsofelysium.com) Rocks hard and strangely!

Hired Goon "Everything's Coming Up Milhouse" (gabbagabbadoh.com) Songs about the Simpsons (successfully obsessive) done in the style of the

Ramones (sorta). Do I even need to describe any further? Seriously, you need more? They have Simpsons names and do ■ love song to James Woods' doomed "Grimesy" character.

Eric Hisaw "Nature of the Blues" (Saustex) Country blues rock so solid and sweet you will move to Austin and mow this guy's lawn for free for the rest of your life.

Holding Mercury "Downfall of ■ Empire" (Bad Nero, holdingmercury.com) Will soon change their name to "Holding Gold Records and Grammys."

Hooray For Earth (Dopamine) Grand, dynamic rock treatises that fittingly would convince aliens to spare our planet.

Hospital Ships "Oh, Ramona" (Graveface, graveface.com) One word: *delight!* (plus the two that proceeded it, and these nine.)

The Hosts (myspace.com/thehostsmusic) Should be called The Ghosts because this pop is scary good!

Hot Panda "Volcano...Bloody Volcano" (Mint) Pand-tastic!

Hotpants Romance "It's A Heatwave" (HHBTM, hhbtm.com) English ladies making happy pop that is either gloriously inept or a profoundly brilliant treatise on infantile noisemaking, basically an all Moe Tucker (on Prozac) band. So to sum up, if this doesn't remind you of the reason you listen to your local college station than your local college station sucks.

Nick Hudson "The Elegy" (Kiddiepunk) Nick Dudson

The Human Value "Push and Pull" (Big deal, bigdealrecords.com) Should be called Superhuman Pricelessness! God's new favorite record.

The Hunches "Exit Dreams" (In The Red) If you took regular music, put it on a vintage thrift store suitcase, let a gorilla shake it up, then dropped it out of an airplane into a swamp, then let Shamans pee on it, you would wish it would sound like this.

Hushpuppies "Silence Is Golden" (Minty Fresh, mintyfresh.com) These puppies rock like big dogs, yet can be as sweet ■ kittens. And their Guitar Hero track is the first time a Minty Fresh artist has been on a video game since they used that Bettie Serveert's music on *Tiger Wood's Dutch Masters '96*.

Frida Hyvonen "Silence Is Wild" (Secretly Canadian) Swede horse love!

Iceberg Slim "Reflections" (Uproar) When it comes to vinyl "player" classics obviously Dolemite is the King and Lightning Rod's "Hustler's Convention" is likely the artistic apex, but Iceberg Slim's 1976 LP "Reflections" is probably the "realest." Not to say that these fantastic tales of pimps, all of whom meet miserable fates, are true or even seem true. It's just that Slim, the noted author who drew upon his experiences as ■ Chicago pimp and his years in prison to become a superstar of urban paperback literature with books like Pimp and Trick Baby, was authentic enough to tell lies that might as well be true. One of the keys to his books was the nihilism: hustling success stories almost always ended with ■ fall more pathetic than the rise is glorious, and the epic poem that kicks off this collection, "The Fall," tells that eternal tale as it showcases his amazing storytelling skills. One of the keys to his literature functioning so well as spoken word (in addition to the obvious history of hustler "toasts" as black oral tradition) is that Slim doesn't affect a clichéd 70s pimp voice like Dap Sugar Willie or white 70s comics imitating black dudes. His extra proper diction makes everything more intense. The autobiographical "Mama Debt" ends this, telling a fictionalized version of Slim's real life exodus from his Chicago pimp life to join his mother on the West Coast as she lay dying. An amazing LP, this was initially reissued fifteen years ago (when Henry Rollins earned an eternal cool pass by putting the monks and Iceberg Slim in print via his Infinite Zero imprint) but now its back in print thanks to a comedy label. This is not a comedy record in any sense, but apparently there aren't any tragedy labels out there, so thank you Uproar, you have made penance for that Rich Little CD!

Ideal Free Distribution "Then We Were Older" (Color Wheel) Should be called "Idylic Freak Genius-bution!"

Ill Ease and the Racket "Turn it Loose!" (Ionik) Strange, collectively unclassifiable (each song might fit into some genre of punk, indie or pop, but all together, what is this?) magic music that cured me like a faith healer.

Iran "Dissolver" (Namack) I ran...to the store to buy 10 more copies.

Jack's Mannequin "The Glass Passenger" (Sire) They should use this music to torture Gitmo prisoners. Just kidding; many of those detainees are likely innocent.

Nick Jaina "A Narrow Way" (Hush, hushrecords.com) Nick makes mellowed out music that is surprisingly harsh lyrically. Not to ay it's negative, just serious and impactful.

Ruby James "Desert Rose" (rubyjames.com) James sure looks young to have these kinda blues/roots chops. It took Bonnie twenty years to get this heavy. This Ruby is certainly ■ "gem" and roots fans will certainly want to pick this rose.

Japanther "Tut Tut" (Wantage) The top record on my wantlist for years has been the legendary 100 LP vinyl set of Sir Laurence Olivier reading the entire Bible. But after hearing this masterpiece, by the world's most don't-know-what-the-hell-they-are-going-to-do-next band, I no longer need that elusive treasure. Anchored by several epic poems recited by the Crass poet dude who makes Olivier sound like ■ guy who would bugger Danny Kaye, this stands as the best English poetry/deconstructed hip hop/punk rock/dance/chaos/bizarro CD ever made!

Jerk Alert "Dirty Slurs" LP, "Candy Ass" EP (Eradicator) Jerk out you jerkoffs with some punk absurdity that is incredibly snotty and in your face. In fact, listening to these records is almost exactly like having someone sneeze on your face! Which, as you know, costs extra.

JT I.V. "Cosmic Lightning" (Drag City) Perhaps the multi-CD-R collection of tons of Little Howling Wolf's insane archival singles released a little while back is the greatest reissue of truly fucked up Chicago underground outsider music, but it was ■ freaking CD-R collection! The fact that this collection, anchored by the infamous, brilliant Velvet Underground meets Mad Magazine meets State Street in the seventies single "Waitin' on the CTA," is vinyl only makes it the coolest ever reissue of fucked up Chicago outsider underground music. Especially because the music is GENIUS! And ambitious; this is a dude too artistic not to be idiosyncratic, but too talented not to make catchy, strangely great stuff. The tragic, weird narrative in the liner notes is worth the cost of the vinyl, as is the sad but beautiful high school yearbook picture on the cover.

July Fourth Toilet "Balls Boogie" (Pro-Am, julyfourthtoilet.com) If one is willing to use the word "legendary" to mean "band that's been a around a long time and even though no one has ever heard of them, if people in Vancouver had any taste or intelligence they would have long-ago embraced and canonized this ambitious, outrageous bizarrely brilliant performance art rock band that surveys pop history's greatest moments and transmutes them into weird gold," then this is the new album by the *legendary* July Fourth Toilet. Paying homage to the finest aspects of the 1970s; the weary magic of Kristofferson's voice, hair salon culture (and it's cultural brother, the arm wrestling fad), shameless drug use, and *ess eee ex*! When I say this record is heavy, I mean some kind of otherworldly heaviness that Jack Kirby would write about in one of his doesn't-quite-make-sense, making you question his ability as a writer Fourth World pseudo-science moments! Seriously heavy! The best record recorded by a band with "Toilet" in their name EVER!

Jumpsuit/Hard Art Group "Cowtown" (Make Or Break) This genre-mutating super theatrical musical/opera about rural misfits and insane ambition (not of the misfits, but of the bands involved) will blow your bovine mind!

Kellarissa "Flamingo" (Mint, mintrecs.com) Larissa Loyvahas the voice of a burdened angel that will make your insides beautifully ache.

The Kickbacks "Even the Blues" (Peeled Label) This is the exact way an American band is supposed to sound!

Kickstart (Serious Business) Should be called Kicksass! This guy sings like the dude Joan Jett!

Kim Phuc "Wormwood Star" b/w "Freak out the Squares" (Criminal I.Q., criminaliq.com) Hardcore garage trash with, ■ little Sonic Youth to it, and lyrics that sound like Skafish could have wrote them. Super ominous wall of grit noise makes this sure to freak out somebody, maybe even some Circles.

Kings Royal "Beginning" (kingsroyal.com) Royalnoying.

Knife the Symphony "Crawler" (Phraty) Spastastic scrambles of art rock genius that stabbed me in the music gullet.

Kocani Orkestar "The Ravished Bride" (Crammed) These groovy Gypsy wedding performers are the most balls to wall Balkan ball band to haul a rack of tubas into a World Music festival. Try *not* to dance to this.

The Krayolas "La Conquistadora" (No address given) The Krayolas, though as Texan as peanuts in Dr.Pepper, are in no way associated with Mayo Thompson's Red Krayola. But they are aided in their Tex Mex/Power Pop crusade by Texas music giant Augie Meyers. As a matter of fact, the band goes back as far ■ the last big Power Pop wave of the late 70s-early 80s (what's that you say? Texas didn't produce any noteworthy Power Pop? What do you call The Explosives or The Telefones, then?). Known, apparently to their dismay, as "The Tex-Mex Beatles," the band struck up a close friendship with a then-recently reformed (tho' never too far apart) Sir Douglas Quintet. Obviously, the lessons laid on 'em by their elder Heavy Friends (though they sho' didn't get TOO heavy) have stayed with them. While the reformed Krayolas cover an array of styles, their hearts remain true to Tex-Mex Rock n' Roll, and even more traditional forms of Mexican

music. While King Doug Sahm (isn't it time he got a promotion?) proclaimed that Big Red (a popular Texan soda, or "Coke," as all brands of pop are called in the Lone Star State) was his drug of choice, I'd say this set satisfies like ■ big-ass Mexican dinner, capped off with a Mexican Coca-Cola IN A GLASS BOTTLE, thank you. Tasteful, but just choppy enough, guitar parts meld together with irresistibly catchy melodies and rhythms you've heard in other places, but will be surprised to hear, here (hey, The Escovedos ain't the only Latino Brothers who listen to T-Rex, alright?). And if that's not enough to make you wanna flip your wig, kitties, we've got Augie Meyers, as mentioned before, breaking out the almighty Vox Continental on several tunes, and, if you have to ask if the magic is still there, one of us is muy estupido, but I'll take the fall, this time, just because I like you. This does not SOUND like some little band from The 80s having another go at it. This is different and original. It's just different enough, and just similar enough, to ■ lot of the better-known Roots acts to come out of Texas in the last 25 or so years...inheritors of tradition, reworking the playing field.

Labor Party "Hellhound Down" (Steel Cage, steelcagerecords.com) Work it Laborers! Rock n Roll about Rock n Roll that rolled me up and rocked me! Pub rock/Oi rooted rawk with some bluesishness to work it all out.

La Celula Miente (BCore) I'm not good at translating, but I think in English their name means, "totally asskicking awesome band!"

Lagwagon "I think my older brother used to listen to..." (Fat) I bet people yell ""Fagwagon" at them to try to put them down. That is wrong and insensitive. But they are not fun to listen to.

Langhorne Slim "When the Suns Gone Down" (Narnack) You'll get all lang-horny listening to this reissue (plus bonus tracks) of this storytelling gamma age Guthrie's debut.

Life During Wartime #9 (POB 1113 97207) A rough-edged punk version of "This American Life" where we hear the story of the dudes who found and sold on ebay the infamous lost Velvet Underground acetate. While I love the production and narration, the dude who is the main interview turns out to be kinda a dickish hipster, discussing the sale of the record at greater length than he describes the excitement of experiencing this strange, special record (though his imaginary war against Lou Reed as a soldier in the Moe Tucker army amused me). Very interesting audiozine, and you can hear some of this at vinylwarning.com/ldw/

Lightning Beat-Man "Wrestling Rock 'n' Roll" (Voodoo Rhythm, voodoorhythm.com) While it is hard to believe this raw, crude one man band music molester became the eloquently creepy, disconcertingly sophisticated Reverend Beat-Man, listening to these now ancient recordings by the greatest wrestling rocker ever born in the shadow of the Alps, makes it clear that guttural growl rock about sex and fighting and Satan is exactly what Elvis had in mind when he died for our sins.

Listing Ship "A Hull Full of Oil and Bone" (listingship.com) If I was listing all the things that make this lushly produced collection of freak-free folk drama ballads awesome I would run out of quills and ink.

The Live Ones "Dirtweed" b/w "Don't Look Down" (Slow Gold Zebra, POB 20506 Tompkins Sq Sta NYC 10009) Knocked me Not Live! Trashy trash rock. For the trashed

LKN "Phraty" EP (Phraty, phratyrecords.com) Literally Kicks Nether-regions!

The Lolligags "Out of Perversity Join Hands" (HHBTM.com) Lolligreat!

Lonely Drifter Karen "Grass Is Singing" (crammed.be) If you don't want to fall madly in love with a quirky cabaret pop chanteuse don't listen to this devastatingly charming album. Or do, you don't know what's best for you and she does.

Looker "Born In The Desert" (Serious Business) I was not sure if this was just purely great rock n roll or if it sounded like a band on a TV show when a girl on the show joins ■ band. Then I heard some cowbell and decided it was just purely great rock n roll. Plus some cool old school girl harmony stuff elevates this.

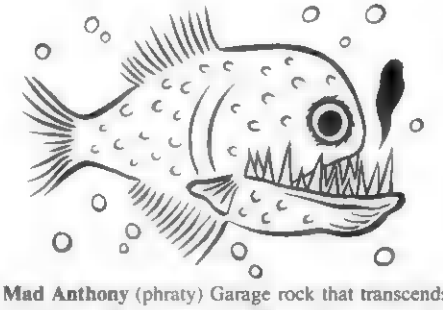
Lords of Altamont "The Altamont Sin" (Gearhead) When garage rockers started metal-ing it up in the early 90s on Estrus Records they were all hoping to sound like this badass CD that just came out now. This somehow manages to keep 60s garage vibes alive amidst ■ wall of hard rocking guitar noise. Lord yes!

Los Difuntos (Nickel and Dime) Anthemic pop punk decorated with rich layers of traditional, ethnic, and dusties radio musics. DiFuckin' Great!

Love Grenades "Tigers In The Fire" (Modus Viviendi) Like their name promises, this dance music will make your boom boom go boom.

Lustra "What You Need & What You Get" (X Off, myspace.com/lustra) Lacklustra

George Lynch's Souls of We "Let the Truth Be Known" (Shrapnel, shrapnelrecords.com) Rock 'n' Roll so big and punishing it should be called Boulder 'n' Roll!



Mad Anthony (phraty) Garage rock that transcends trashiness with some arena riffage – I'm not mad at you, Big Tony!

Made in Ireland compilation (Iceland Music) How can Iceland be bankrupt when they make hit records by artists like Sigur Ros (OK, kinda boring) and amazing dance music by FM Belfast and Steed Lord? Take advantage if the weak krona and buy this amazing comp.

Mad Juana "Bruja on the Corner" (Acetate, acetate.com) Sami Jaffa's gypsy pop voodoo incantation band will make you want to mount ■ accordion like an entranced horny dog.

Magnetic Morning "A.M." (Friend of Fux) Repellent.

Mike Maimone "Open Mic Nights, Empty Bottle Mornings" (mikemaimone.com) Though his weary, exasperated phrasing, clever nihilism, and elevation of piano bar tropes to rock n roll heights recalls Randy Newman, Maimone's underlying sincere sentimentality (as opposed to the insincere sentimentality of Newman's "Sail Away") brings to mind an unjustly less revered 70s songwriter; Paul Williams. Despite his pissing and moaning, like Williams, Maimone demonstrates a sublime sense of optimism (in his case, a dreary optimism) about everything from love, to vice, to suicide, to *Caddyshack II* (not necessarily in that order, but come to think of it, probably in that order) in story songs that tattoo their way upon a listener's consciousness. And following his Carter-era muses, the lush production (with fearless forays away from piano man territory) seems to imply that Maimone belongs in an era when people actually bought good music.

Brian Malone "The Mechanical Voices" (bjjmalone@gmail.com) He should have called the album, "Malone Again, Unnaturally!" An eclectic mix of instrumental experiments that range from eerie to peppy, with numerous stops in "eerily peppy" territory. For fans of the increasingly popular Prog Irish Gypsy World Calliope Scary Movie Music genre

Man At Arms "A Waste of Time and Space" (Joyful Noise) A prog LP played at 45rpm that you want to hug lovingly with your man arms.

The Mansfields "Cramp Your Style" (Gearhead) You'll lose your head over these Cramps-y/Dolls-ish trash rock beauties.

April March ■ Steve Hanft (Martyrs of Pop) Two people this talented and as good at creating magic as this should not be allowed to collaborate – it's hard to take it's so good. If they have ■ child he would be a mixture of Galactus, Jesus and Barack Obama. Best songs ever.

Charlotte Martin "Orphans" (charlottemartin.com) She sounds like either a future angel or a scary fairy.

Matt and Kim "Grand" (Fader) "Grand" is an understatement. I believe *"Grande"* is in order! Lushly fun pop that you probably should dance to.

Matthew and the Arrogant Sea "Family Family Family Meets the Magic Christian" (novapostavinyl.com) Acoutickled me! Melodioisly mellow.

Max Tundra "P.E.B.Y." (Domino) Strange joyful futuristic music that makes you like the future. Despite the presence of proper-sounding new wavey vocals, the clean, mesmerizing nature of the recordings makes me think of elevator music, but the kind that would be in Wonka's Great Glass Elevator.

The Maynards "Date and Destroy" (themaynards.ca) Should be called The May-be-the-awesomest-band-evers.

Brother Jack McDuff "Gin and Orange" (Dusty Groove) McDuff is not exactly known ■ Mr. Cocktail Jazz, but he mixes a few drinks up here, including the title track and the opener, "Mac-Duffin" which sounds like something that would be on a late 60s/early 70s BBC or Thames hip show where dudes in suits might do comedy or detective work at the drop of a derby.

MC Frontalot "Final Boss" (Level Up) Remember how Steve Urkel used to use an invention to turn himself into the Fonzie/Billy Dee Williams mashup named Estafan Urquell? I always figured it was because the actor didn't want to seem to genuinely nerdy. Thus, we have the king of nerdcore rap, who actually looks fashionable and handsome, and seems to be making fun of nerd stuff more than celebrating it (unlike Weird Al who had fun, but never made fun, of nerd obsessions), and who raps like Eminem. Mind you, this record is fun, and good, and there's a skit with a *Star Trek* guy. I'm just saying, he's the least nerdy nerdcore rapper, not sure if he should be king or should be exiled from nerd-dom.

Meat Dbeatles Vol 1 (dmusic) What is the point of doing Beatles covers if you can't be more interesting than this? Reverence is boring.

Menthols "Miracle Slips" b/w "Rats and Insects" (UFO Dictator, ufodictator.com) They are called the Menthols because they are so damn cool. But also

ecause they make you feel like you rubbed Ben Gay on your privates.

MESA "Child of Thunder" b/w "In Cold Blood" (UFO Dictator, ufodictator.com) Heavy Viking god rawk that made me get a tattoo of Odin drumming behind a giant kit with lightning bolt drumsticks.

Messthetics #106: The Manchester Musicians Collective 1977-1982, Messthetics Greatest Hiss Vol. 1 (Hyped to Death) Usually rare underground music comp series get worse as they go along as less worthwhile Killed By Deathers or Pebbles or Back from the Gravers or Bloodstains fill the grooves. But this series of obscuro British weirdo music (not quite punk, not quite anything, released as low run singles or cassettes) just keep getting better. That said, the two new volumes are kind of ringers. Because the Manchester scene organized in a way that everyone got to play live a lot the collection of their songs, while still full of ridiculously obscure bands doing oddball tunes, has an air of polish and professionalism unheard on previous volumes. Bands like Passage, Valium Girls, and Dislocation Dance almost sound like "real" bands. On the other hand, the "Greatest Hiss" volume collects original punk-era British cassette releases that are so fucked up it's hard to believe Hyped to Death held out this long releasing this madness. Most of these twisted tracks sound like they were recorded in musty bedrooms by solos or duos or trios made up of by clever misfits too outsider for the outsider punk movement and the sound quality suggests they caught these on the last pass before the tape melted for good. Listen for the creepy Gravity Craze, the bizarre Instant Automations and the pre-Chumbawamba Chimp Eats Bananas (clearly the best band name on the comp).

The Metal Teeth "Wild Eyes" EP (UFO Dictator) Spare creepy junk rock that accuses you of not being awesome enough to appreciate its awesomeness.

Middle States "Happy Fun Party" (Effen) Middle GREATS!

The Minor White "Old Theatrics" (prairiequeenrecords.com) Sounds very minor and very white.

Morel "The Death of the Paperboy" (Outsider Music) Better than Oasis. But Oasis would disagree.

Movie Star Junkies "Melville" (Voodoo Rhythm) More like Jonah than Moby Dick, as this record sounds like it was recorded from inside a giant whale using whale bones for instruments. Million dollar junk!

Jon Mueller (Radium, jonmueller.net) Sounds varyingly like the music that plays on the moving sidewalk at the United Airlines O'Hare "Terminal of the Future" and like that same music with the CD skipping.

The Luke Mulholland Band "Further" (lkemulholland.com) Damn it's bluesy in here! Never invest too much in the 12 year old white kid who's presented as the awesomest blues prodigy – he will be replaced soon enough. But a 19 year old is not a wunderkind, he's a boyish man! This will rock you, baby.

Murs "Murs For President" (Reprise) There once was a late period Donna Summer single called something like "Dinner with Shakespeare" that had lyrics like, "I want to have dinner with Shakespeare, coffee with Einstein," and I heard her give an interview where she stated that it felt good to put out a really intelligent single, as if making a single that just talks about being intelligent is the same as being intelligent. Murs seems to spend half of his average, outdated rhymes explaining how his hip hop is so great and conscious and important and political, without ever demonstrating it. Murde!

Music To Make Your Ears Hurt Trey (Black & Blue) How Black & Blue found a eight bands as fucked up, sick, and nasty as these trashmongers is kind of scary to contemplate. Bloody Mess, WMFO, Cedar Street Sluts, Cherry Bombs, Renegade Slave, Swell Chemistry, Blue Nouveaux And Lena Luna could devastate entire populations if they teamed up and let their collective diseases fester together and mutate.

My First Days On Junk "No Order" (State Capitol) My First Days On Jenius! Beyond lush, which is appropriate, because shooting junk is definitely beyond being a lush.

Mystery Girls "Incontinopia" (In The Red) My strongest praise for this strange, dynamic collection of irresistibly catchy garage psyche weirdo rave ups is that I declare this the best of the 138 bands I've heard called the Mystery Girls.

Nano X "Repetiton" EP (Shit Sandwich, shitsandwichrecords.com) Made me want to have Nano Sex! Poppy punk Made In Japan that will make you injure yourself pogo-ing.

Zack Nichols "Bright Eyes" (zacknichols.com) Normally I might comment that a singer/songwriter who is not aware that he shouldn't use "Bright Eyes" as a title because it is kind of taken, but looking at the beautiful blue, and dammit, bright, eyes of this soulful balladeer...he is the real Bright Eyes, dammit!

night artery "capsize your surrounding" (nightartery.com) Made my arteries nauseous.

Novillero "A Little Tradition" (Mint, mintrecs.com) YESvillero! Now that's what I call power pop!

Obi Best "Capades" (Social Science) Obi Better Than Best! Airy and icy, yet thick and warm, this will improve your lovemaking ability.

One Block Radius "Album Sampler" (Mercury) Makes LFO sound like Tupac.

The Organ "Thieves" (Mint, mintrecs.com) I've seen my organ look as sad as these songs sound and I've also seen it look as pretty as these compositions. But never at the same time.

OWL "of wondrous legends" (locustmusic.com) To quote an owl, "Who?" As in "Who would want to listen to this?" Answer: not everyone, but if you are in one of the choosier, more jaded factions of the Freak Folk nation, this lost 1971 cerebral Chicago psychedelic ramble may bring you to full mast. To my ears it's a little dated and pretentious, but I really like the ethereal, dreamlike quality of the song cycle, and it's one of the rare keyboards-trump-guitar psychedelic soundscapes you'll ever hear.

Andrea Plamondon "I Still Remember" (tigressmusic.com) I want to compare Plamondon's voice to someone's but I'm not quite comfortable namechecking Kate Bush, Grace Slick, Klaus Nomi, or Ofra Haza; none of them exactly suggest the drama and power and compelling weirdness of Plamondon's pipes. Coupling her voice with several different musical configurations (including Joy Fm, Satyrica, Pox Eclipse, and Lucid) Plamondon sings jarring political songs, operatic pop, and most interestingly, World Music hybrids in which she occasionally goes into that strange vibratic vocal thing beautiful sirens on *Star Trek* would do...maybe her genre should be called Otherworldly Music. This album will leave you exhausted and possibly confused, but also jonesing for more of this strange, seductive stuff.

Plan 9 "Manmade Monster" (nickelanddimerecords.com) Misfits tribute band turned Misfits channeling band writing original monster movie songs. While they sound way more Misfits-ish than Balzac, the dude's voice is not particularly menacing. It's like Dave Matthews is trying to scare [redacted] by singing about aliens and dragons. That said, great creepy guitar sounds and rumbly spooky production. I would go see this band everytime they played if I lived in their lair/scene.

Plastic Crimewave Sound (Prophase) Solid psychedlia does not require drug use but simulates it. But a little enhancement here and there never hurts. PCWS makes me prouder of Chicago than Barack Obama.

Play "s/t" (playpdx.com) Or don't play.

Plushgun "Pins and Panzers" (Tommy Boy) Riddled me with plush pullets that left me enchanted and charmed. Imagine how this might affect someone who actually liked British eighties bands with asymmetrical haircuts!

The Poggs (Club) Forget prog rock, god rock and grog rock, the next wave is Pogg Rock, which is identified by taking college rock (90s style, meaning Dave Matthews/Hootie, not REM) and making it listenable. Pogg-tastic!

Point Juncture WA "Heart to Elk" (?) Sad fairies singing.

Pontiak "Sun On Sun" (Thrill Jockey) A fable in which a magical drum makes gravity malfunction so that extreme heaviness loses it's traditional weight...or does it?

Poppets "Pre-Party" EP (Bachelorrecords.com) Infectious no-fi snot punk that will pop some kind of fruit on your body.

Power of County "See You in Rock 'n' Roll Heaven" (Union) Hard rocking honky tonk music that takes the edge of [redacted] rockers like AntiSEEN and applies it to straightforward country twang without irony or disdain. This aptly named band plays the hardest hillbilly music you'll hear.

Powersolo "Egg" (Crunchy Frog) Grandly ridiculous scrambled rock n roll foolishness that doesn't care if it's making 70s cop show music, Zappa-rific riffage or comedy music. More Power to ya!

The Presets "Apocolypso" (Modular) Should be called the Presex, because this record feels better than foreplay!

Prima Donna "After Hours" (Acetate acetate.com) Saxed-up Downtown trash rock that makes you want

to wear a boa and shoot heroin. This is what glam is supposed to sound like.

Proud Simon "Night of Criminals" (proudsimon.com) I'd rather listen to that beeping toy Simon®.

Purple Submarine Orchestra "Acapulco" (Martyrs of Pop) Sunshine Pop so sunny it gaves ■ ■ sunburn. This sounds like California having an organsm.

Push Pull "Hello Soldier" (Sick Room) Pushed me to want to pull this CD out and play it 783 times! Just good progressive slightly weird rock.

Puttin' On the Ritz "Bangin' Your Way Into The Future" (HotCupRecords.com) ??? Seriously...???

Quatre Tete "Art of the State" (Sickroom) Scramble rock timing and strangely powerful chops make for something that makes you feel excited and paranoid and nervous and blissful at the same time. There was some drug I used to take in high school that did the same thing, but I can't remember what it was, so I think I'll keep this LP handy.

Quintron "Too Thirsty For Love" (Goner, goner-records.com) Over the course of their epic career Quintron and Miss Pussycat have released records that challenge listeners to endure the entire thing and records that made your joy and feet jump from the second the needle hit the groove. Their creepy, naughty new release falls somewhere in between, with tracks that make you groove and grind guiltlessly and a few that have you scratching your head. You'll be a "Model Ex Citizen" with "Dirt Bag Fever" when "The Boss Wants to Party With You," and if you question whether Mr. Q is in fact the boss, just listen to his organ getting pumped; he has seriously become one hell of a key pounder! And the line between New Orleans Spellcasting art puppet rock and hip hop gets even thinner here as the album actually contains ■ bonafide *skit* (though it is an actual funny TV parody skit *a la* De La Soul circa 1989, not simply space filler, so maybe he's 20 years off). Basically as Young Weezy gets weirder and brings the mainstream with him, Quintron's New Orleans deepness gets closer and closer to making sense.

R'&Bs "A Hardcore Addiction" (slowhandguitars.com) A powerful blues rock steamroller that will flatten your weak assed band!

Timothy Remis/Al Burian split 7" (?) Two bedroom singer/songwriter presentations, but one of them is not done using a four track, but a 1936 portable 78rpm vinyl cutting lathe and the other wasn't recorded in ■ standard bedroom but in ■ dorm room at Smartass Genius College.

Research Turtles (myspace.com/researchturtles) Futuristic teenage pop music that will beat any rabbit in a race. Or any Rabbi.

Restavrant "Returns to the Tomb of Guiliano Medidici" (Narnack, narnackrecords.com) Hillbilly house music. I guess that makes it Shack Music. But Shaq would hate it. But he would be wrong. The music of 2MORROW!

Richard Cranium (myspace.com/officialrichardcranium) Math Rock with the energy of meth and the ternacity of a moth. Maeoth Rock!

Rise Against "Appeal to Reason" (Interscope) *Every* song *should* be an anthem!

Rock and Roll Adventure Kids "Boobies" EP (Bachelorrecords.com) THIS is what a rock n roll single is supposed to sound like --- songs that unquestionably rock your ass off and use phrases like "jelly roll," "teenage caveman" and "whoa whoa whoa whoa."

The Rockford Mules "From Devils Spit to Angel Tears" (therockfordmules.com) Kids, *this* is how you rock! Sounds like a Ford hitting a mule. At a Skynyrd/Bob Seger concert.

Rock 'N' Roll Monkey and the Robots "Back to Beatsville" (Motor Sounds) Gloriously this band not only has this amazing name but actually works monkeys and robots into every other lyric (not to mention zombies and clowns). Better yet, the music has a fantastic ultra cool pre-garage rock but totally rock 'n' roll vibe that falls somewhere between juvenile delinquent jams and spy music. Beatsville may be the best destination on the planet, but screw your GPS, you'll need to pull ■ oversized folding map out of your fuzzy dice-bearing tailfin convertible to locate this boss burg.

The Rockwells "Place & Time" (Migrant)Should be called the RockGREATS!

Rogue Motel "Daylight Breaking" (roguemotel.com) A motel that you will have no trouble falling asleep in.

The Rollo Treadway (rollotreadway.com) Zombies/Hollies lush pop with a little Wilson-ian flair, these genuii are on a Roll-o!

Anne Roos "Mermaids & Mariners," "A Light In The Forest," "Haste to the Wedding" (cambriamus.com) Roos is ■ master of the enchanting, angelic Irish harp, and these CDs tell cinematic, romintic stories more vividly than narratives with extraneous things like words ever could. One peeve, though these are all marketed ■ book/record combinations, only the Irish wedding book is a really good, thorough, exciting book (the disappointing mermaid book is more an illustrated CD booklet just telling you the contents of the CD). But hell, mermaid illustrations and Irish harp should be enough for anyone.

Royal Bliss "Life In-Between" (EMI) Who likes this?

The Runs "Piss and Shit" EP (Criminal I.Q., criminaliq.com) Actually sounds like real rats playing crummy broken down punk rock instruments and singing in a creepy rodent voice between gnaws on electrical wires or whatever rats gnaw on.

Sasha "involver" (GlobalUnderground) Remixes of your faves (if Thom Yorke, Telefon Tel Aviv and Ladytron are your faves) by ■ chrome domed DJ hellbent on making magical music to enhance the pleasure of lovemaking robots.

Micky Saunders/Dan Susnara "Singles," "In a Luv Factory" b/w "That's Nothing New" (7806 S. Kilpatrick Chicago, IL 60652) Over the last decade these two songwriters have been recording pop that often transcends bedroom 4 track aesthetics and credibly toys with Lennon/McCartney fantasies. Their latest single and retrospective CD make is clear that this Micky/D can really serve up some tasty nuggets!

Steffen Schakinger "ElectriGuitaristry" (Candyrat) SchakinGREAT!

Scott Pinkmountain & the Golden Bolts of Tone (Howell's Transmitter) This experi-Mental musical journey leaves great Scott so emotionally bare he should have named himself Scott Pink-bottom.

The Service Industry "keep the babies warm" (Sauspop) Power pop that sounds like it's made by dudes who have been power pooped on, yet still have the heart to make sunny music despite the unsunny ways of this world. Inspiring!

Shades of Brown "S.O.B." (Dusty Groove, dustygroove.com) This reissue of a 1970 LP by ■ lost Chicago sweet soul group sounds like a Dells cover band trying to write originals. As the album ends with a lite funk tune called "Garbage Man" (an unfocussed message song) you can see how the group could have maybe made a bogger impact in Chi-town by being Temptations imitators in a city that didn't have the Temps than by impersonating a local treasure like the Mighty Mighty Dells. Not essential, but an interesting period piece.

Shannon and the Clams "Scuffle with the Clams" (Myspace.com/shannonandthe clams) Clam-tastic! If your band is better than this, congratulations, you are Angus Young, Malcolm Young, Phil Rudd, Cliff Williams or Brian Johnson. Otherwise, worship these shellfish.

Gene Shaw Quintet "Breakthrough" (Dusty groove, dustygroove.com) This reissued 1962 album features some smooth bop from Mingus sideman Shaw, and though I doubt jazz scholars consider this a masterpiece, I can't see how anyone would not dig this session. The older jazz deejays on the community station here really love stuff like this that isn't so slick it tickles WNUA territory (officially "smooth") but is thoroughly easy on the ears nonetheless, and grooving to "Breakthrough" it's hard to find fault in that logic.

The Shirks "Dangerous" EP (Big Neck) This bouncy tuff punk had me Shirkin' off til my eyesight started failin'!

Sholi (1/4 Stick) Shnoozi.

Shoot it Up "Outta Control" EP (Criminal I.Q., criminaliq.com) Punk rock that's so frenetic it gave my apartment a seizure and I had to re-hang all my pictures, thermometer, and grade school diploma.

The Simple Carnival "Girls Aliens Food" (simplecarnival.com) If Brian Wilson's had a nice dad this is the music he would have made!

Six Feet Under "Death Rituals" (Metal Blade) The best thing about this album may be the cover art featuring a skull with a shock of attacking Medusa snakes springing from it; Chris Barnes is actively trying to convince us that white guy dreadlocks are cool, and he's starting to chip away at my resistance. What may or may not be the best thing about the album is that it sounds incredibly clean, uncluttered and almost un-heavy, as much like the most pop oriented N.W.O.B.H.M. (Priest, I suppose...I don't count Def Leppard) as straightforward Death Metal ■■ get. Maybe that's good, this is almost pleasant to listen to, and borders on enjoyable. But is that what we want from our brutal music?

16 Second Stare "Red Carpet Material" (Mighty Loud) If you want to rock the 00s, apparently the best way is to filter kickass 60s and 70s garage rock through 90s alternative rock and just skip the damn 80s.

The Skabs "Revenge of the Skabs" (Black & Blue) With the blood from the breakup with Bloody Mess all dried out, Gabby Skab has coagulated ■ band that performs nasty, rough, surprisingly personal punk rock n roll (which is way more rocking and "street" than punk rock, *sans* the "n roll"). Skabtacular!

Joshua Slamp "Sketches" (joshuaslamp.com) This dude is *very* good at the guitar, though blues picking fans and George Bensonites might not fall into the same ear camp. But when his resonant vocals kick in it lassos things together.

Slank "Anthem for the Broken Hearted" (slank.com) Stank. Was hoping I wouldn't have to make that stupid rhyme; they are big in their native Indonesia. But, dude...eccch.

Slow Gun Shogun "Eve Adam and the Apple" (myspace.com/slowgunshogun) This twanged me just the way I like it twanged.

Meaghan Smith "The Cricket's Quartet" (Sire) This Canadian super charmer makes old timey sounding songs that are certainly originals (no Tiny Tim-esque covers here) and original. She sounds like birds and would spontaneously land on her shoulders and woodland creatures would lovingly snuggle up to her like a Disney cartoon.

Zak Smith "An Endless Doubt" (zaksmithlive.com) If Zak Ephron could sing like this they wouldn't have dubbed his voice on the *High School Musical 1* soundtrack, and if the songwriter for that film had Smith's, biting, bordering on evil, sense of black humor dealing with human foibles, than it probably would not have been as big a hit. But with any justice, this CD will outsell that soundtrack!

The Smittens "The Coolest Thing About Love" (HHBTM.com) Smitastic!

Soft Targets "Soft Targets Must Be Destroyed!" (Roostercow) Unless I am remembering incorrectly, there was a time ('78 or '79, maybe?) when major labels started placing full page ads in music magazines that featured both their mainstream acts (Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, perhaps) and newer punk or new wave bands (like the Clash, and, yes, I know they weren't on the same label). Listening to this Soft Targets CD reminded me of those ads and that era in music. Punk and classic rock existed as separate entities, but there was an overriding feeling that was created by the mixture of genres. There are some sonic traces of both cited bands on "Soft Targets Must Be Destroyed!," but it is the manifestation of the spirit of the late 70s/early 80s that makes this record an exciting modern document.

The Soundscapes "Freestyle Family" (BNS) Should be called The SoundsGREATS!

Soy Un Caballo "Les Hueres De Raison" (Minty Fresh) Translates as "I Am A Horse," and I am hoarse from cheering and applauding this delicate Belgian bon bon of a record! You will fall in love with everything if you listen to this, so hide the pets before putting this on.

The Spinto Band "Moonwink" (Pack the Van) Spintastic!

Staags! "Adult Brigade" EP (DHRR) Staageringly awesome. Sounds like a knife fight in a hyena factory.

Star Fucking Hipsters "Until We're Dead" (Fat) Star Fuckin' A! Contains the best political punk tea drinking/cop killing song of the year.

Stealing Jane "Say Something" (stealingjane.com) Not ashamed to like Maroon 5? I can almost respect that.

Fred Stein "Pizza & Ice cream" (fredsteinmusic.com) Stein is far too talented a Beatles-esque songwriter and his production values are too high to consider him an outsider musician, in the realm of Art Paul Schlosser and the fringe of the Dr. Demento scene. Yet his jokes are not quite timely or hilarious enough to be on the upper echelons of Demento comedy (a song about the wackiness of going to the mall in 2008? OK, it's a pretty good song, but a song about the mall in 2008?) That said, I dig Stein's tales of bad dates and everyday annoyances, and the powers of good attitude because they sound good, and I even if I never laughed aloud, I think I smiled ■ few times.

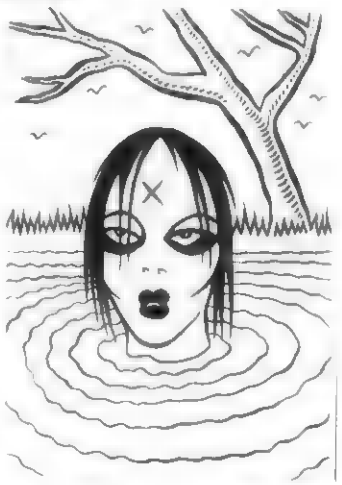
Trade Stevens "Something" (witty) Balance of the universe – Ron Isley goes to prison for tax evasion, trade Stevens doesn't go to prison (as far as I know) and makes this smooth album!

Stiff Donut "Like Cake on a Plate" (mthymson@aol.com) You know the stereotype of Jerry Lewis/Sammy Davis Jr. types saying, "I kid because I love." Stiff Donut kids because they hate. Stiff Donut hates fat Goth chicks, indie rockers, reality television, cops, the Pope, Donald Trump's hair, work, smoking, gold digging women, babies, and everybody. Except Gene Simmons. And hey, who doesn't hate all that stuff...at least they have the bravery, and $4.37 for recording, to sing it out loud. Spread the hate and seek out these evil CDs.

The Strongest Proof "(robot eats a steak)" (Phraty) The Longest poop.

Submarine Races "Hard to Look At" (In The Red) I was originally a big fan of the Ponys because triumphantly fey Anglophile Ian Adams didn't seem like he fit into ■ ambitious garage band, making the whole thing kind of weird and dynamic. When Ian quit the band sort of normalized, but soonafter Ian's own Submarine Races record seemed to lean too much in the angular direction of an 80s Brit hair swoop. This follow up is more rocking, still Anglophiliatic, but with more 60s Brit Pop this time out. Very groovy!

Summer Wardrobe "Cajun Prairie Fire" (Sauspop) Aggressively ambient psyche pop that mindmelds with 60s headtrippers. Knock knock! Who's there? Summer who? Summer better than others! These cat's included.



Superman Curl (Myspace.com/supermancurl) Bulletproof upbeat, joyful college bar rock that makes me feel...wait for it...super!

The Sutras "Those Are Mountains" (Zhivago), "Thousandaire" (thesutras.com) Sutra-rific! These CDs contain lots of music and all of it is very good.

Swingin' Utters "Hatest Grits" (Fat) Utter-ly necessary street punk rarities compiled, bonus-fied and tied up with a bow for anyone who can't get enough punk that asshole critics like me call "anthemic"

The Takeover UK "it's all happening" (Ryko) This is so rocking it made me take up rockclimbing just to appreciate its rockingness! If this band wasn't signed I'd start a label to put their record out. I'd probably eventually rip them off, but my heart would be in the right place.

The Tanks (Scenster Credentials) Tank you Jesus for delivering this pummeling Ridiculo-core rock masterpiece! Furiously rocklicious!

Teenage Jesus and the Jerks/Beirut Slump "Shut Up and Bleed" (Atavistic) Lydia Lunch, the Godmother of No Wave, and her crew of art damagers made noisy nastiness three decades ago that sounds like it was recorded tomorrow. This collection of rarities and alternate takes will make you move to New York and look fruitlessly for Max's Kansas City until you go crazy and your voices in your head sound like this CD. *(also see Guest review section)*

Teenbeat No. 1 Record Label sampler (Teenbeat) A band called Bossanova covers Diana Ross and they certainly push the definition of bossanova, but I'll give them some leeway. A group named The Ballet does ■ kind of bedroom drum machine Morrissey homage that would be hard t ballet dance to, but I'll concede that ballet has broadened its boundaries, so it's cool. But when a band called Cotton-Candy plays some kind of ethereal pixie music that the would never be alien to the amps of the mighty Cotton Candy, the band from Ron Howard's legendary directorial debut *Cotton Candy*, the greatest garage band movie of all time, you have gone too far, Teenbeat!

Tempered Cast "Reach" (temperedcast.com) Tempered Crap.

Templars "Out of the Darkness" b/w "Weighed Down" (Templecombe, templars.com) If you need some folks to come in to your office and fill in for a few days for the guys whose job is to put the boot in and lay down to metallic Oi than hire these Temps!

Terrible Twos (Criminal I.Q., criminaliq.com) There's some kind of odious emo pop children's music band called the Terrible Twos – I'm pretty sure this spastic, near-demonic trash explosion punk act is ■ different group. So if you bring your pre-schoolers to the Lager House in Detroit to see this combo not only will they not play "If You Ever See an Owl" or "We Can All Get Along with Dinosaurs," but your child will actually kill you in your sleep that evening, drink your blood and go out and start ■ good band.

Jimmy Thackery and the drivers "inside tracks" (Telarc) Regal rootsy rock that travels the rural roads, the Midwest garages, and both urban and country honky tonks. The imperfect cracks in Thackery's voice make him twice the man any flawless prettyboy trying to find this heart of rock n roll could ever be.

Thank You "Terrible Two" (Thrill Jockey) This sounds like a computer model of DNA looks; a twisting confusing collection of colorful little balls that is dizzying and hypnotic. Not to say this has little balls, this has very big balls.

That Handsome Devil "A City Dressed in Dynamite" (LGM) A Devil from the hipster circle of lounge revival hell.

that's my daughter "it takes tuna tango" (myspace.com/that'smydaughter) That's My New Favorite Band!

The Theater Fire "Matter and Light" (theaterfire.com) The Theater Bucket of Cold Water.

Three Second Kiss "Long Distance" (Sickroom) 2,004 Second Orgasm!

Totally Michael "s/t" (iheartcomix.com) Totally rad! Falling somewhere between Atom and his Package and Vice Cooler, TM made me think more deeply and artistically about cheerleaders and drill team members than ever before in life.

True Widow (End Sounds) Heavy meets creepily misty. The most disconcerting Halloween music you could play at your haunted house...but you would guarantee some serious nightmares.

Frank Turner "Love Ire & Song" (arbonrecords.com) If the ambitious, honest Turner were the norm, "singer-songwriter" wouldn't be a dirty word.

2021 – an aviation records compilation (aviationreocrds.us) Best band: Fleet Foxes. Best band name: The Can't See. Best song: Weirdlords "Joan of Ache."

Ugly Stick "Still Glistening (Hovercraft, hovercraftpdx.com) These Columbus veterans play the kind of twangy rock n roll that you don't age out of, so this is a welcome return, not an overstayed welcome. Any band ballsy enough to write, record, and then actually be able to deliver a song called "Rock n Roll Party Weekend" ("Party on Friday...it ends never!") deserves your beer money.

The Unsacred Hearts "in defense of fort useless" (Searious Business) Sexed up blues punk that makes you want to shake.

The USA is a Monster "Space Programs" (Load) One of the biggest sounding bands in post-Pagaea, this is the most regressive prog ever recorded. These are the true Monsters of Rock who make you think while making you want to let your mind just go somewhere else.

Vee Dee "Glimpses of Another World" EP (Criminal I.Q., criminaliq.com) This record actually made my penis discharge pus!

Velouria "kiss it better" (eskimo) Gritty sweet sounds that haul more pop than a soda truck. Velovely!

Verona Red "Side Effects" (veronared.com) It's rare to get actual twists and turns in indie rock these days (other than the contrived pre-determined ones of twisty turny-core bands), so hearing this band shift gears between hard, slinky, bouncy, ominous, rootsy, and points in between is refreshing. With resonant vocals and lyrical guitar work this band should have your advisory rock n roll threat level at Red

The Victors "days to come" (followyourplan.com) The Vic-bores.

Eerie Von "Bad Dream #13 (Ghastly), **Eerie Von's Spidercider** "That's All There Is" (Ghastly) This Danzig associate creates a solo album that falls somewhere between his old boss' sound and that of Bobby "Boris" Picket, but he delightfully surprises with his Spidercider band, delivering a healthy glitter sheen of glam/pop that polishes up the expected creepiness. But despite being more Glamhain than Samhain any old time fans will be pleased just by the sheer greatness of these well written tunes.

Twan Von Hovi "After A Year" (Interventionmedia.com) Twan Von Homo! I mean that in a good way – he seems in touch with sensitive sides that transcend gender and sexuality.

Wee Hairy Beasties "Holidays Gone Crazy" (Wee Beatz) This pro-farting, pro-ice cream for breakfast, Alaskan vampire sympathizing children's music CD may be the punkest things the Mekosn in this supergroup have done since the 80s! Every kid I played this for loved it. And farted.

Ween "At the Cat's Cradle, 1992" (MVD) In 1992 Gene and Dean Ween and some pre-recorded backing tracks somehow crafted pure garage punk that didn't sound at all like garage punk. There was something gloriously ugly, wrong, and a little mean about their strange music during these early days and though one could certainly make an argument that the band was better live in later years when they had the freedom of ■ living backup band that could react and shift more than their robot backups could, I like the extra weirdness of this. A bonus DVD features various performances from the same era which backs up all the other words I just wrote.

We Landed On The Moon! "these little wars" (welandedonthemoon.com) We Landed on MTV in 1987.

Werewolves "ES" (BNS) Though there's ■ few moody "Bela Lugosi is Dead" drones here and there this is not ■ record that I would normally associate with werewolves, or any creatures of the night for that matter, as most of it is indie rock psyche, meaning not really psyche at all. But the spooky track ("Heaven or Hell") would definitely enhance your next haunted house party. (note: before spellcheck I had written their song title ■■ "Heave and Jell," which would be an awesome song title...it's yours!)

The Whip "X Marks Destination" (Razor & Tie) Lush dance rock that whipped my butter. If robots and aliens can grind to this in satellite space clubs then you can to.

The Whore Moans "Hello From Radio Wasteland" (Mt Fuji) Dudes, the word "hooker" is always funnier than "whore." Sure, you lose the pun, but you'll be opening for Rickles in six months, guaranteed! As it is, your brilliant, energetic, dark trash punk goes too underappreciated. Hooker Moans...bank on it!

Brad Wilson (bradwilsonlive.com) In Chicago, "Home of the Blues," capitol of tourist blues bars, the place where "Sweet Home Chicago" might as well be a McDonald's jingle we are rarely impressed with straightforward blues rock. But, damn, sometimes straightforward blues rock hits the spot. Wilson will never win a Macarthur Grant for innovative genius, but if you need a solid Gibson slinger with soul to lay down the money notes this is the cat.

Reuben Wilson and the Cost of Living "Got to Get Your Own" (Dusty Groove, dustygrove.com) Wilson is ■■ organ playing cat who you may know from cool jazz soul stuff on Blue Note around the early 70s. Well this is from the Ford era and he's driving a metaphorical Cadillac. Wilson lays down some straight up funk, with cool assed vocalists laying down raps and heavy sax. Overall, this is the kind of funny, fun, funky record you are hoping for when you pick up ■ promising 70s R&B record you never heard before, and as a low cost CD reissue you have nothing to lose.

Robert Windpony "Wings of Change" (grandcanyonflutes.com) Obama-themed Native American flute music that inspires and hypnotizes. Apparantly Obama mentioning Native Americans in his victory speech was the first time ■ president has given a nod of that prominence in ages.

Witchdoktors "$3 Hooker" (Tribal Vibes) Trashy trashabilly that keeps it silly. Any band playing music like this and not having fun has some problems, while tiki-worshipping, lecherous, surf/garage/rockabilly kooks like this have the solutions.

Cindy Woolf "Before Daylight" (cindywolfe.com) She might be a Wolfe but she boldly expresses her magic like a charming songbird.

The Wolverton Brothers "Old Ugly and Loud" (Ionik) This piece of plastic holds some strange noises too menacing to call psychedelic and too ambitious to classify as any kind of "garage rock." Suffice to say that my theory that Ohio fucks its residents up in an often glorious way seems to be supported by this evidence.

Brice Woodall + the Positrons "Sine Wave Sea" (AEMMP) Spooky emotional music so tasty he should change his name to Brice Pudding.

Nimrod Workman "I Want To Go Where Things Are Beautiful" (Drag City) It would be a profound understatement to say that Mr. Workman was the ultimate personification of authenticity. When he was embraced by documentarians (including song collectors, folk festival curators, and filmmakers) in the 70s until his death at 99 in 1994 he was a toothless, super old looking, folk singing Appalachian retired coal miner/Union man with Native American blood, black lung, and a talent for singing old country ballads, original tunes about his hardships, and traditional American music in the voice that must have made a thousand ethnomusicologists spooge in their shorts. It is almost pointless to tell you how good these couple dozen spare, haunting tales of woe and wonder are, but if you can think of a better place to be than on Workman's porch while he rocks in his chair and sings and sings, than I either envy you or pity you.

Popcorn Wylie "Extrasensory Perception" (Dusty Groove) OK, I'll admit that until I just listened to this CD I had been confusing Detroit icon Popcorn Wylie (one of the first Motown artists) with Wylie Dixon of Chicago R&B act Simtec & Wylie. Never mind that they lived in different cities, I just always liked the idea that a dude named Popcorn was friends with a dude named Simtec. Now that I've thoroughly discredited myself with all actual soul music collectors, let me pontificate on this interesting reissue. I had a ladyfriend that would always comment when I played scratchy 45s by the cats who didn't quite make it big that their records sort of sound like actual dusty hits, but there was always something obviously just off enough to explain why these sides didn't break. That definitely applies to this 1974 offering, with the strongest songs (especially one about ■ wild after hours club) sounding like good album tracks rather than singles, and the schmaltzy disco lesser tracks sounding like fluffy filler. But that said, Wylie has charisma in his voice, classic lush Detroit production is like pizza, baby (good even when it's bad), and the dude is named *Popcorn*. And he probably would have got along great with Simtec Simmons.

mykal xul "jonhson county line" (Gulcher) Beautiful filth! Sublimely offensive.

Yahowa 13 "Sonic Portation" (Prophase) I guess I would call the LaBelle reunion album the comeback of the year -- that record is awesome --but as far as the most surprisingly solid, super unexpected reunion record it has to be this one. The story of father Yod and his Source Family commune/psychedelic band the Ya Ho Wa 13 has been told in ■ remarkable book, tons of reissues, and the amazing Drag City release of their lost rock musical, so I won't recount it here. But I will say that in the wake of Yod's hang gliding death in 1975 most 'cults' would gob the way of the dodo, but obviously he tapped into something, because over thirty years later the spirit of his teachings (not to mention the music that sprouted from it) is still somewhere in the ether as members of the original musical group have reconnected and are making new original sounds that are seriously solid, and far more interesting than most of the so called "freak folk" stuff out there. The two musical secrets of these rocking, chanting, noisemakers is that some members had a solid foundation in musicianship and pop songwriting and that all created, and still create, music with utter conviction.

Yarn "Empty Pockets" (Ardsley) No yawns from yarn, as this joyful (even on a song called "I Feel So Low"), mandolincious Americana makes you want to square dance with your dog.

The Young "4 Songs" (Criminal I.Q., criminaliq.com) Should be called The Stung, because they sound like bees just attacked them. They even get their guitar to sound like bagpipe, which we all know attracts angry bees. This is a seriously great record.

The Younger Lovers "Newest Romantic"/"California Soul" (Retard Disco, retarddisco.com) I thought this was going to be good, that's kind of a positive thing to say, right?

Your Gracious Host (myspace.com /yourgracioushost) If you festishize the "pop" (and I mean the power kind) you may not be able to handle the pop-gasm of auto-erotic asphyxiation-level you will get from this masterpiece.

Michael Zapruder "Dragon Chinese Cocktail Horoscope" (Sidecho.com) Zapruder comes off like a storytelling monk whose precious, almost mystical musical tales seem to contain lessons and morals beyond mere mortal comprehension. So clearly, with my sub-human capabilities, this is above me, but I am very entranced and intrigued.

Aaron Zimmer "Live Wires" (aaronzimmer.com) The A to Z of indie-rock awesomeness.

TV/FILM/VIDEO

ANTiSEEN "Destructo Vision" (Steel Cage) This video collects a handful of brutal concerts in the 2000s by a band that is sort of hard to believe is real. If you were creating an imaginary evil fantasy hard rocking band they would look and sound exactly like this, and sing about wrestling, and cover the Ramones, and cover the stage with blood and fire. Behind their ragged beards and husky frames and Confederate flags ANTiSEEN pretends to be meatheads, but obviously Jeff is a pretty clever dude...burning a washboard in a Southern parody of Hendrix' guitar is actually a pretty sophisticated joke. But then again, do smart guys jump off drum risers onto burning folding tables covered with thumbtacks? Apparently, YES! But I will not vouch for the fan who cute his head open when the crowd becomes frustrated that Jeff has not juiced (bled intentionally...which he does anyhow ten minutes later). Though these are raw videos shot with one or two camcorders each, they are sort of in the perfect format to appreciate the vibe of the shows. When the cameraman's attention is diverted form the stage to shoot footage of ■ beautiful woman on the ground either kicking someone's ass, or having her ass kicked, he's only reflecting what everyone else wanted to look at as well. And as one dude standing next to the camera says, summing up the mood of an ANTiSEEN audio assault. "... nothing wrong with partying..."

The Beach Boys and the Satan DVD (ABC Entertainment) This German documentary form 1997 strives to define the surf/California culture that set the stage for the rise of the Beach Boys, and then explore the connections between Brian Wilson's brilliance and the terror of the Manson Family. It actually doesn't do that good a job, in a sense that it doesn't tell you anything even a casual fan doesn't know and it really does not go into depth with anything. *BUT* do they ever talk to the right people! This is worth seeking out just to hear Kim Fowley *sing* his commentary, first a tune about what California was like in 1967, and then his musical love letter to Manson. Also Dick Dale (as well as ■ number of surf music legends) tell tales of wave riding and pre-Beach Boys instrumental music magic, artist Mike Kelley (whose music side in never mentioned) discusses hating the Beach Boys, the late Greg Shaw sets the scene, David from Pere Ubu is interviewed for some reason, Don Was demonstrates how embarrassing white people with dreadlocks can look, and Brian Wilson tickles the ivories. Though no one says anything you don't know, it sure s fun to see awesome people yabbering.

The Beatles "Magical Mystery Tour Memories" (MVD) Surprisingly good Beatles documentary cobbled together to make a feature around some great looking home movie footage shot of the boys as they filmed their *Magical Mystery Tour* movie. Though, with ■ few exceptions (Spencer Davis, Neil Innes, Beatles tour manger Tony Bramwell) they are just talking to regular British folks who happened upon the filming, that's fine. The kids who ran up to the sets and the blokes in the pub were used by the Beatles as scenery and supporting cast in their improvisational trippy made-for-TV movie, so their charming if inconsequential memories are pretty valid. Most importantly, this film is much easier to watch than the actual *Magical Mystery Tour*.

Black Metal Satanica DVD (MVD) For anyone interested in the dark, evil history of back metal, going back to ancient Viking days (thank you people dressed up for the Viking equivalent of a renaissance fair) to today's black metal scene(including Shining, a suicide-themed black metal band that hands out razor blades at shows) can get a clear, intelligent history from this documentary, that interviews numerous very articulate, good-at-English black metalers who describe their anti-Christian corpse paint shenanigans very clearly. The biggest knock on this film (other than it being light on actual music) is that not only could you get this story by reading the books on the subject, but probably by spending the film's running time on the internet – many of the archival images in this are taken from the internet. That said, it's nice to hear the Satanists (and Viking worshippers who reject the concept of Satan) speak for themselves.

Chocolate News (Comedy Central) I will give David Alan Grier credit for making you root for him and like him and think he's a funny guy even when what he produces isn't quite funny. Usually when you try to describe ■ skit to someone who hasn't seen it it's just not funny, but almost all of these skits sound like they were better than they actually were when you tell someone about them.

A Colbert Christmas (Comedy Central) Genuinely good music (Mr. Colbert apparently loves to sing – the choral harmonies on the Elvis Costello/John Legend/Feist/Willie Nelson/Toby Keith/Colbert "What's So Funny About Peace Love and Understanding" are heavenly), really funny jokes (Keith's "War On Christmas" song is a howler) and a love for all that's skewed about celebrity Christmas specials (look for the numerous awkward jump cuts) make this the new "Ebbie!" You know, the 1995 Susan Lucci "Christmas Carol" update! Humbuggered me!

Composing the Beatles Songbook 1966-1970 (MVD) Seriously, do you want to hear Christgau, ian DeCurtis, and British journalists and musicians pontificate on the arty Beatles? Ecch.

Desperately Seeking Paul McCartney DVD (MVD) Fucking awful! Ruth Anison was ■ young reporter who interviewed the Beatles briefly in L.A., resulting in ■ joke marriage proposal from The Cute One. The fact that an awesome still and incredibly awesome film footage of this exists is the basis of this staged, fake documentary, where everyone (including Ruth) is completely incapable of acting *like themselves*. Which could be OK, plenty of heavily staged reality shows have people acting completely fake and stiff, but at least they have some charms, but this insulting film has no one displaying any charm. And no one is even majestically charmless, like Gene Simmons on his reality show. But one can't really blame non-actors for not being able to act (or act like they are not acting), but what is amazing is that this won an award at ■ "mockumentary" festival called Mock Fest, which means that Mock Fest must be the absolute worst festival in the world. Do not attend it!

Ed Wood's Devil Girls, Ed Wood's The Vampire's Tomb, I Was A Teenage Beatnik! (youtube.com/user/terminalpictures) Somebody once told me, "You're only as good as your influences," and we're talking good influences from "bad" movies...the kind of modern trash the little puppets on *Mystery Science Theatre 3000* would have a field day taking the piss out of. If you've only watched the original Psychotronic films, interrupted by jokes and gags and incessent talking (that you could have gone to ■ REAL movie theatre to hear), you've missed out. Filmmaker Andre Perkowski is going against the grain, in more ways than one. His films seek not only to take the supposedly late, lamentable "Exploitation" genre, into the 21st century, but they jump from one form of cinematography to another. It isn't perfect, and it's not always easy to take.

Neither is love, but you'll jones for THAT when it's gone. *I Was a Teenage Beatnik* (which has nothing to do with Beatniks, by the way) follows a similar "Rags to Ruin" path as Herschell Gordon Lewis' The Blast-Off Girls," perhaps the most true to life Garage-Punk movie ever made. It reads, to ■ degree, like an experimental college film, and partly like a Ray Dennis Steckler homage. As it happens, Steckler actually appears in this film, in brilliant form ■ the grumpy video store guy. The late, great John Carradine even turns up, that is, his lifemask does, no doubt on loan from Ted V. Mikels (who directed Carradine and Tura Satana in *The Astro-Zombies*), seeing as how Mikels also appears, for about one second, in one of many hallucinatory collages of herky-jerky animation, public domain cartoon footage, and intentionally chemically-treated live action shots. Somewhere in and around the inner psychoses of ■ misunderstood "teenage" Rock n' Roller who wouldn't be caught dead at Guitar Center, we find the anti-hero, miraculously (or, as a calling card from Hell?) putting together a willing backing band, the Velvets-inspired (though too inept for Lou Reed at his worst) Farmingdale Sound Machine. Other ghosts from the past haunt the proceedings, including -- *would you believe?* -- Dick Contino. Now, the last time I saw Dick Contino he had a good portion of his torso exposed, straddling a huge accordion, with his belt and top pants-button undone, hands on his hips and a grin that seemed to say "Top THIS, Iggy." This was, by the way, at The Milwaukee Italian Fest, not one of my sick fantasies, thank you. So, as the movie began doing a number on my subconscious, I might have missed Contino. One thing all Perkowski's films have in common is you WILL see different things each time you watch them, though it's always good to stay on your toes (just as, if I hadn't seen *Ghost World* twice in it's initial run, I wouldn't have noticed there's an issue of Roctober in the "Zine-O-Phobia" store). The band cranks out simple, yet erratic cover songs (many, or all, of which will surprise you) that sound, at times, like Television (the band and the appliance) being pushed down a flight of stairs. Of course, they're met with an unscrupulous manager who offers them a record contract that even Winslow Leach would have passed on, but they say What the Hell." Of course, there's soon dissension in their ranks as the band trusts its frontman, and each other, about as much as they now do the music industry. Who will come to seal their fate, or set them straight ? Why, it's Neil Innes, of Bonzo Dog Band, Monty Python and Rutles fame (and, a sweetheart of a guy). He gives the lads a good talking to about the pitfalls of the business, plus the fact that they'd released a deconstructed version of The Bonzo's classic, "I'm The Urban Spaceman," as "I'm The Suburban Spaceman" with great, sarcastic lyrical rewrites. What happens, next, to this day, I don't know. You'll have to see the movie. When I first heard that *The Vampire's Tomb* and *Devil Girls* were based on the unreleased writings of Ed Wood, I was, somehow, under the mistaken impression that one of these films might be the (somewhat) recently discovered Ed Wood-scripted pic with Uschi Digard in all her glory (which I've seen before, but, that's not the point). Oh, well. You can't fault ■ guy for dreaming. It was ■ small, small dream. Tim Lucas of Video Watchdog really hit the nail on the head when he said, "The expressionistic bent, high energy and super 8/16mm origins suggest...a more nascent Guy Maddin." And, actually, purists be damned, the same thought went through my head, too, while watching these surreal interpretations of Ed Wood's vision. Perkowski's use of Super 8 and 16, which goes from a hazy, atmospheric effect, especially that surrounding the ethereal vampire woman of *The Vampire's Tomb* or the sexy, but deadly, *Devil Girls*, to an authentic Silent Era look and feel that would suggest Maddin's influence, on a budget that would suggest Wood's. These are NOT hash-'em-out, ironic, would-"B" movies, nor do they claim to be high art, but that doesn't mean they couldn't be ■ hit on the Art House and Film Festival circuits. Still, both are more coherent than *Teenage Beatnik* (though I still contend that is a movie to spend quality time with). In *The Devil Girls* (based on a paperback novel by Wood, you'll even see some of his other books on display in the movie) "Criswell" rises from his coffin to introduce the story, and later turns up, in voice only, several times throughout the picture, to comment on the action (the voice is that of an actor portraying the great soothsayer), with ever-outrageous predictions thrown in along the way. The story unfolds with a gang of males tearing up a classroom (for no discernible reason - nicely done). They don masks looking like the knockoff monster masks sold in the *Famous Monsters* knockoff magazines (including a Tor Johnson mask!) and stab ■ teacher to death (again, with no explanation). An atomic blast, taken directly from Wood's *Bride of The Monster*, suggests there's bigger trouble brewing in what appears to be a small border town, in either California or Texas, even though the cop on the case (not Kelton The Cop, but a younger facsimile called Officer Klein) is wearing a Chicago Police uniform (I wonder if he's supposed to be the slovenly Officer Klein who used to walk the beat in my neighborhood). A much tougher gang has arrived, all sexy young women, blonde, brunette, and redhead (or so it seems, it's hard to tell in Black and White), seemingly in homage to J. Michael McCarthy, who has, himself, suffered the slings and arrows of just wanting to make some cool movies. The girls briefly flirt with lesbianism, because they've taken to smoking pot, while another turns out to be a junkie. The local Sid Haig-like drug pusher wants to use the girls ■ a liaison between the local suppliers and his connection in Mexico. The cops AND the local Clergyman are now on the case. The beautiful, but deadly, girl gang leave themselves out in the open anyway, wreaking havoc at the local teen hangout. The girls meet up with Lobo, the same Lobo character portrayed by Tor Johnson, performed in ■ manner perhaps no better than George "The Animal" Steele and certainly no worse than the Actor who played Tor in the stage version of *Plan 9* (that guy wouldn't even shave his head!). All the while, scratched, blurry and even burned film loops rub shoulders with footage of Lugosi in *The Devil Bat*, a repeat of the atomic blast from *Bride of The Monster* (this time, followed by brief stock footage of the [real] octopus), and, what looks like an early demonstration of ■ Moog synthesizer. Eventually, the drugs take hold of the girl gang, causing The Devil Girls to fall back on sexual experimentation (though no real sex or nudity is shown, you do get a glimpse of a black bra or two, which I highly approve of), and of course, matricide (the father had already been taken care of, offscreen, by his other daughter). The Mexico deal gets called off, as even the slimiest dealer in town wants no part of these Bad Girls, while an animated skeleton arises from an out of focus graveyard, William Castle style, to read the girls their rights (of which they have none), and send them packin' to Hell. "Criswell" appears one last time to deliver a fatalistic epilogue..." God help us...in the future." *The Vampire's Tomb* probably strays closer to Wood's innocent, though twisted, ideal of filmmaking. Again, the film is interspersed with wild quotes from Criswell, but, this time, it's audio recordings of the real Criswell (" I predict Marijuana, LSD and speed can change your sex!" Not you sex LIFE, your sex!). The film opens with marauding pranksters in highly covetous vintage monster masks, and goes headlong into a familiar scenario about a family at odds about an upcoming inheritance, not knowing their house is lousy with vampires. The expressionistic shadow plays that follow prove to be the sinister Dr. Acula. Not only was "Dr. Acula" an intended Ed Wood feature that would have starred his doomed star, Bela Lugosi, but what you get here is ■ far more credible Lugosi impersonation than Wood's chiropractor, Tom Mason, could muster in *Plan Nine From Outer Space*, when called upon to sub for the already-dead Bela. Visually, he's outstanding. Though his face is covered at all times (Like Mason's was), there's no mistaking who he's supposed to be...whoever's doing the "Lugosi" voice, here, captures some of the subtleties that others seem to miss, but still seems to lean on the "Jewish" Dracula voice in *Mad Monster Party*. Dr. Acula's vampire bride walks, entranced, through the entire film, mostly confined to the cemetery that's also, conveniently, the grounds for the quarreling family. Impending doom times two, no stop signs, no speed limits. The vampire woman conjures the essence of Carol Borland, Lugosi's co-star in *Mark of The Vampire* (she's also something else Borland proved to be in the end, but why would I spoil it for you?). Amidst changes in gradation, from Black and White to grey, and even day changing to night, and back again (to better effect, I would say, than Eddie's lack of attention to detail...which, yes, we love him for), the vampire woman roams, arms outstetched, like a kid playing "Frankenstein," oblivious to the action around her. We do see her once, with her husband, entering their tomb (a bit of afternoon delight, perhaps ?), and terrifying the stray visitor to the graveyard, but her purpose will yet manifest itself while siblings argue. While the vampires loom heavily around the architecturally impressive surroundings, awash in Gothic cathedrals, and even a real, turn of the century-looking cemetary, again, unlike the ones Ed employed, another frightening visitor makes his presence known. Why it's Lobo! Good to see you again, Lobo. Don't be afraid, Lobo is as harmless ■ a kitchen...kitten ! His presence is noted by the same, earlier, stock atomic explosion (the explosion wasn't originally Wood's idea, but, yeah, it did look great, and, if it had been relevant to his own concept to *Bride of The Monster*, he might have used it three times, too). Amidst more stock footage, further bizarre film collages (which I'm liking more and more), varying degrees of clarity, and that old Wood standby, the visible boom mike (I'll admit, I didn't see this until the second time I watched the picture). Violence looms heavily between two greedy brothers. Oblivious to the very real threat all around them, they decide to settle their petty differences...BY KUNG-FU FIGHTING IN THE CEMETERY!!!! BUT I won't reveal the shock-surprise ending!

Flaming Lips "Christmas on Mars" (Warner Brothers) As Flaming Lips have morphed from a regular band to ■ multimedia art project over the last decade they've never shied from piling on absurdist visuals, if not to the point of overkill, certainly to the point of diminished impact. In that light, their new feature film, *Christmas on Mars*, may be their most focused work of visual art yet. This surreal fable of a crew of troubled astronauts whose decaying ship seems to have doomed them to a galactic grave, made the rock festival circuit this Summer, and is now available on DVD. The tone of the film recalls Stanley Kubrick's *2001* with David Mamet as a script doctor, and cinematography cues were definitely taken from the black and white creepiness of David Lynch's *Eraserhead*. But the film's two main visual themes (claustrophobic peril and

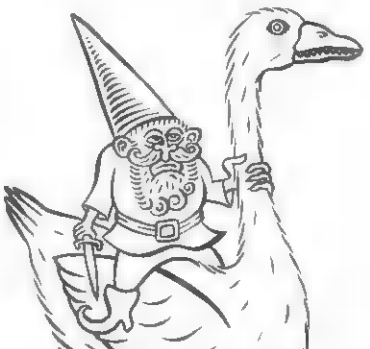
tangible manifestations of the fear/worship of female fertility) feel original. And while this is certainly one of the least expensive sci fi films in years (the set reportedly built in Lips frontman Wayne Coyne's backyard), it avoids the pitfalls common to low-budget space movie. The special effects seem to be appropriately dreamlike rather than realistic, and the bad acting is not of the wooden or overly-theatrical varieties that plague Hollywood b-movies. Instead, lead actor (and lead guitarist) Steven Drozd delivers his dialogue in a halting, semi-comfortable style pausing far too long between lines. Though it hurts the "narrative" at times, along with the haggard look his years of well-publicized heroin abuse has burdened him with, this reading does a good job conveying direness. As far as the film being a holy vessel for spreading Christmas cheer, that's a little trickier. Coyne's mute Martian wearing a Santa suit peeled off ■ corpse is more savior than jolly elf, furthering the contemporary Santa/Jesus conundrum. And though the film obsesses over a miracle birth, the fact that we see a depiction of this Christ-child's abortion-surviving fetus being stomped to death by marching band made up of vagina-faced Nazis will certainly keep this film off the Hallmark channel. Ultimately, whether this movie will stand as a holiday classic or as the digital age's equivalent of a stoner midnight movie can perhaps be determined by one of the film's most memorable lines, uttered by an exasperated astronaut shortly after relating the baby-stomping story: "We're on Mars...where am I gonna buy drugs?"

Al Foster Quintet "New Morning" (inakustik) Like Drumbo's touring Captain Beefheart band, Miles Davis' stickman also apparently has been touring with an act paying homage to the music of his mentor. Though opening and closing with numbers Davis made immortal, the band transcends being a mere tribute, as killer solos (not from Foster, though) and amazing vibrations thrill the Paris crowd. Though the slick video production is sometimes more intrusive than it has to be, this still stands as ■ pretty hip jazz DVD.

The Hudson Brothers Razzle Dazzle Show – The Complete Series DVD (VSC) So kids, back in the 70s before "reality TV" filled the gaps in the summer TV schedule, there was ■ thing called "summer replacement shows." Many of them were variety shows featuring pop stars to obscure to get there own real show, but since it was only for ■ few weeks, what the hell? Usually it didn't work out to well, like the Starland Vocal Band show, but Sonny and Cher ended up becoming big stars because their show far outlasted the summer. Now one interesting thing about these shows it that they were all fucking awful, mostly because the 70s TV idea of ■ vaudeville-esque variety show involved dumb jokes and inane musical numbers that insulted the adult audience's inteligence, and they still threw in some naughty double entendre's and jokes about the president, even though they were presenting ■ show that was basically at a knock knock joke level of sophistication. Now normally Saturday morning kiddie versions of grown up type shows are incredibly insulting to children. It was remarkable how the writing on *Saved by the Bell* was actually below the standards of terrible prime time sitcoms. But somehow, by stripping away the pretense that 70's style pop star variety shows were *not* aimed at 7 year olds, the Saturday morning version of this genre was actually far superior to its nighttime forebearers. *The Hudson Brothers Razzle Dazzle Show* featured a group so obscure they make Starland Vocal Band look like the Kinks. Even today other than one of them siring Kate they are not well known (no singles made the Top 20), yet they had ■ prime time summer replacement variety show which led to this kiddie show (and they had another show later, and a movie). I haven't seen their other shows and I barely remembered this one, but this complete series reissue makes a great case for it being one of the best of the sorry 70s variety show bunch. Sure the jokes are terrible, the writing is bad, and the comedy (involving a bear suit, ■ puppet emu, and ten guys in Frankenstein suits) is incredibly corny. But on the other hand, it has a bear suit, ■ puppet emu, and ten guys in Frankenstein suits. And it's better than the Donny and Marie show. And the Jacksons' summer replacement series. Best of all, they were really good singers and songwriters, and even when they did hokey cover songs they had some real soul; this band would have been on Apple records if they lived across the pond (I believe they were labelmates with Barbi Benton on Playboy records in the States). And as an extra bonus, since no one has ever even considered looking at these tapes since they ran in 1975 they don't have much wear and tear. The vivid colors will make the Fruit Loops you are eating on Saturday morning when you watch this look pale in comparison.

Iggy & the Stooges "Escaped Maniacs" DVD (MVD/Charly) This 2005 concert may feel exactly like most of their recent Stooges concerts, but unless you were in the photo pit or on stage with the band, it looks better and more exciting than your perspective when you saw them live during this can't miss reunion. The incessant editing and effects that mar some of the previous Charly concert DVDs are fine here; the music is so intense and Iggy so animated no amount of cuts and silly filters and camera angles can match the wild controlled chaos of what the band had going. A must see for fans of the band or human anatomy buffs.

Jeff Dunham's Very Special Christmas Special (Comedy Central) Some might say this comic should be rejected because he does ventriloquism. Well fuck you, puppets are theoretically hilarious! I say reject Dunham because he opens this with a half hour of stand up about his kids. It's not that comics who do family friendly stand up are not funny, it's just that they are not funnier than your friends, so why bother



Kraftwerk and the Electronic Revolution DVD (Sexy Intellectual) Gloriously deceptive, this documentary covers a broad swath of German electronic, Krautrock, and art prog, genuflecting the most towards our robot friends, but giving a great picture of the Kluster-ish, Tangerine Dream-y scene. And hearing German intellectuals and critics expound somehow seems far more convincing than their English and American fanboy counterparts (or at least seems better dressed).

Lower Class Brats "This Is Real!" DVD (TKO) This DVD features some documentary stuff (interviews, backstage), but mostly it's long live sets from the mid-nineties when the Clockwork Orange-themed band was new. Being from Austin and not the Lower East Side or the Sunset Strip their take on Bowery street punk and glam was never too clichéd (well, at least not more than was appropriate). It's amazing how obsessed they are with their inspirational book and movie, including at one point the singer showing all his Clockwork Orange trivia tattoos. And he proudly insists that he was into derby's *way* before he joined the band. Let's let that be the last word.

John Mayall's Bluesbreakers "Live at Iowa State University" (MVD) The Walter Trout-era 80s Bluesbreakers break it down at a Midwest gig...and *damn* it's bluesy in there! If you dig the guitar, the blues, and the historic talent Mayall has for finding talent, you'll enjoy this hour of power.

The Meatmen "The Devil's In the Details Volume I" (MVD) Fucking genius! I went earlier this year to see the Meatmen live with high hopes but very low expectations. I was completely blown away. I love the Meatmen's early ridiculous Michigan hardcore records, and LOVE the slick DC "Superbikes" stuff, but I'm cooler on the later Metal-ish stuff. But live it doesn't matter what songs Tesco Vee plays, he is gloriously obnoxious, hilariously crude, and brilliantly adept at prop comedy – he's like the hate-filled, racist, pornographic, masturbation-obsessive Carrot Top! (And yes, I know Carrot Top is hate-filled, racist, a porn hound and ■ chronic masturbator, but I was talking about his more chaste stage persona) Anyhow, Tesco's decades of shamelessness, ego-abuse, and anything for a laugh shenanigans are perfectly captured on this 10 pounds of shit in a five pound DVD box collection. Grainy, nearly inaudible camcorder footage of early 80s Michigan all-ages rocking is made to look better by having all the new 2008 footage shot and edited on what must have been broken thrift store video equipment. This includes framing sequences of Vee as Satan endorsing and hosting the DVD, demonstrating that Tesco is willing to spend hours putting on red devil makeup but not 2 minutes memorizing the script he awkwardly reads off cue cards. The mish mash of absurd footage from over the years includes live gigs from every Meat era, Tesco selling collectible toys on cable access TV, a briefly animated version of the Meatmen "you suck" screaming drawing, a *Behind the Music* parody, great and awful music videos, and the icing on the cake, Tesco's storied MTV show, which I won't say is good, but I will say it actually exists, and I have always wanted to confirm that. And some of the live footage, especially "Superbikes" era and insanely old stuff, is priceless.

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers "Running Down A Dream" (Reprise) Though this four hour (!!!) documentary is a non-critical, lovefest infomercial for the band (Oh Bogdonovich, Bogdonovich, Bodonavich...)...so what! The first hour of this may be one of the best documents of a young band ever presented anywhere, in part because Petty has been so loyal to the close-knit band of buddies that made up his first garage bands, but moreso because someone had a movie camera and shot footage of EVERYTHING! When the rookie band throws a little concert on their rural Florida property that turns into a spontaneous huge festival, we see footage, when the band's car breaks down on the way to California we see them fucking around on the road. When the record label sets them up in L.A we see

them jumping in their little bungalow's pool in their clothes. Just the story of recording a demo in a truck in their Florida backyard and driving it out to L.A. to shop it just be driving up to record labels and asking them to listen is amazing. Then after they hit they are on all these European TV shows and they ▬ SO good (and those shows shot bands really well). I am a little cooler on the contemporary concert that makes up a healthy chunk of this epic, but I was so convinced I loved the band and the songs that even that was cool. I know this is for diehards, but it is also ■ nice piece of propaganda for guys like ▬ that didn't know they loved the Heartbreakers.

Punk's Not Dead DVD (purevolume.com) I am shocked at how convincingly and logically this moved from the grand punk days of the 70s and early 80s into the 1990s pop punk Epitaph/Fat comerical acts, and not only justified the latter's existence, but made me root for bands I thought I fucking hated. Director Susan Dynner triumphantly collected some of the best footage of 70s and 80s punk and hardcore bands you've never seen, and also triumphantly posited a global punk world, where there are no boundaries between countries, scenes or between punk and hardcore and pop punk and Oi and whatever My Chemical Romance is (a failed "Dance With Me"-era TSOL tribute act?). With members of Black Flag, NOFX, The Adicts, UK Subs, and ■ bunch more. Pretty good!

The Sarah Silverman Program (Comedy Central) Unless you hate her, you just have to love her. I love you, Sarah!

John Sebastian "Welcome Back" (MVD) This straightforward 1987 college concert (playing guitar, not piano or autoharp as he did originally on many of these tunes) is pleasant enough. Obviously Sebastian was a great songwriter and had no pretensions so a no frills, imperfect voice, smiling concert is nice to watch. Not thrilling to watch, but nice.

Paul Stanley "One Live KISS" DVD (New Door/Universal) I was at this concert, and knew they were filming, and though I sorta regret not squeezing in close to get on tape I am really happy I didn't see that the front row was full of planted sexpot girl "fans." While I love looking at booby girls the fact is they were not needed; I loved this show because the fans loved Paul so much and because Paul seemed to TRULY enjoy playing on his own without Gene (and pretty much only playing KISS songs he wrote, even ones Gene sang, and somethat KISS had never played live). As Stanley fluffed his hair, told the glam rock equivalent of Borscht Belt dirty jokes, and just rocked the hell out backed up by the ultra-pro House band from the TV show "Rock Star" he really sold the idea that this is what rock stardom is about: loving rock 'n roll! Even the tunes from his 2006 solo album are pretty damn convincing in this setting with that band, and surely no man has ever rocked a leopard skin-patterned blouse with the conviction of Starchild.

Cat Stevens "Tea For The Tillerman Live" DVD (Wienerworld/MVD) If *anyone* ***ever*** justified sitting on a stool and playing an acoustic guitar and singing in an affected voice with a big beard on your face it is this dude. It makes you forget how awful every other bearded troubadour is as you watch this 1971 concert in front of a few dozen fascinated college kids sitting cross-legged on the floor of an LA TV studio. And these versions of "Moonshadow" and "Wild World" and the rest don't sound shabbier than studio versions, actually he is so casually super-professional that they ▬ almost slicker, but with just ■ little more "life" because of the audience. This is really amazing, moreso when you realize how timeless this should-be dated stuff feels. This is driven home when this ends with an incredibly dated 1972 animation piece.

The Story of the Yardbirds DVD (ABC) A preliminary peek at this may be unpromising (it opens with ■ summary montage where an authoritative British accent seems to be used to substitute for licensed footage and the bonus booklet features liner notes for a years-old reunion CD that have ▬ bearing ▬ this DVD). But once one really watches this concise summary of the 60s' reign of Britain's premiere guitar blues band (if you consider the guitar royalty that did time in the 'Birdhouse) it is pretty satisfying. Using new and archival interviews with virtually every band member and manager (and even producer Mickey Most) this gives a pretty broad picture of what went on, and the amazing footage from international TV shows at the time is almost always presented at ■ satisfying length (and as bonus footage a lengthy German TV performance!). Of course, there's plenty of access to Keith Relf, Chris Dreja and Jim McCarty, but the interviews of Eric Clapton (actually putting down the inorganic nature of the rotating band lineup), Jimmy Page and Jeff Beck stand out a little. The main hitch is that though Beck is completely intelligent, never says anything dumb, and gives perhaps the most interesting interview in the documentary, the fact that this 80s' footage was most certainly used by Christopher Guest as his *exact* model for hair, clothes, manner, and posture for *Spinal Tap* makes it hard to take him totally seriously.

Yes "Yes 35 – The New Director's Cut" DVD (MVD) If ▬ loves Yes the intimacy of this concert DVD, both backstage and during the concert, and the connection between the band and the audience and the dudes onstage with each other is impressive. But this double DVD contains either 4 or 43 hours of Yes (it was hard to tell how long it lasted) which is a bit much, yes?

BOOKS/ZINES

Absent-Cause zine, ***Mentally Ill*** (absent-cause.org) I hate to say this, but usually goth/dark wave types strive for deepness in their sad thoughts and death embrace, but come off as pretty shallow thinkers. But these zines and comics marry this sensibility with the curiosity and willingness to study and gather data one associates with campus feminist and human rights activists, allowing for ■ really compelling reading experience.

a rough guide to bicycle maintenance, (microcosm, microcosmpublishing.com) If you bought the "Chainbreaker" book you have this info, but you likely can't roll that thck book up and shove it your pocket when you hit the puncture hazard road, so get this.

BFF by Nate Beaty (microcosm, microcosmpublishing.com) This guy can really, really, really draw. This collection of his zine comics has graphics that range from urban landscapes done with rich, realistic linework to comic stories done in a joyously light humorous cartoon style. He can channel Gary Panter, Lloyd Dangle, Carole Tyler, Ron Rege Jr, and many of his varied styles are truly original. But these personal journal comics are not very interesting to read.

Bill Daniel's Mostly True (microcosm, microcosmpublishing.com) This is a fascinating, graphically lovely reflection on the history of hobo graffiti, reflecting on the romanticism of train hopping myth and reality, the nature of art, and the relationship of hobo chalkmarkings to contemporary grafitti art. Certainly what makes this book really work are archival reprints of articles of yore championing hobo heroes (and even an advertising campaign claiming a hobo millionaire created the company's new booze product), but the coverage of new school hoboes (their art, slang, and gossip included) makes this Mostly Awesome.

the Blindwurms by Paul Nudd (paulnudd.com) Made me bust a Nudd!

The Blue Line (outside the stadium) Just like aging hardcore punk rockers who built their identities on hating Reagan were emotionally conflicted when the Gipper kicked it, this long lost hockey zine dedicated to denigrating Blackhawks owner Bill Wirtz has mixed emotions as it goes back into production just to dance on his grave after the sleazy businessman went to the great penalty box in the sky. Despite Wirtz' son reversing most of his dad's most unpopular decisions before the body was cold, I'm still guessing Rocky Wirtz may not be happy with humorous calls for his sainthood sharing pages with scathing proposals for his dad's tombstone inscription froo humorists who once ran ■ cartoon of Wirtz literally sodomizing the fans. Bravo you puckers!

Carbon 14 magazine (www.c14.com) A treasure trove of trash!

The Elvis Encyclopedia by Adam Victor (Overlook Duckworth) This in an absolute treasure – 600 giant pages of everything Elvis, written in ▬ informed, not dry, but not critical (in the sense of injecting his own prejudices) style. This functional encyclopedia has subjects like "Jewelry," "Hawaii," Pets," "Voice," and "The Estate," not to mention entries on every song (he refrains from saying anything harsher than "silly" about "Yoga Is As Yoga Does") and record (even listing 500 bootlegs, including "Greatest Shit") and countless associates (even Chuck Norris, whose co-worker stole Priscilla from E). I tested it out and it did pretty good. I looked up Scatter, Elvis's chimp, and there was an extensive entry. Also, on the Million Dollar Quartet section he accurately concluded that Elvis' girlfriend was Marilyn Evans (a previously disputed ID, though she has been found and interviewed since this book came out). I was disappointed to not see entries for Tura Satana (the *Faster Pussycat* vixen who has told some great stories of her days as an Elvis girlfriend), Redd Foxx (who palled around with Elvis in Vegas, and I think may have been the only performer at Elvis' small wedding), or Janis Martin (who was

dubbed by RCA "the Female Elvis," who recorded a stellar Elvis novelty song for RCA, and who shared a 10" EP, released in South Africa only, called "Janis and Elvis," one of the most collectible Elvis records). The latter is not a surprising omission, as this book is less focused on early alternate foreign collectible repackagings of Elvis songs and more on the recent CD reissues with alternate tracks, unearthed material, and studio chatter. By honing in on these recordings Victor gives a better appreciation of the totality of Elvis' recordings. And the pictures are great! I thought Peter Guralnick's 2-volume Elvis book (and the resulting Elvis Day By Day behemoth) was the ultimate research project and the last word on the King, but Guralnick (who I now know was born in 1943 and first wrote about Elvis in 1967) has ■ challenger in Victor.

Fack* #2, *Fack* #3, *Skully minicomix ($3 for all three, www.jwlkpress.com) Graffiti-style comix and sketches that will blow your skull!

Follow For Now edited by Roy Christopher (Well-Read Bear) From the "pages" of Christopher's frontwheeldrive.com website this collection of interviews "with Friends and Heroes" is outstanding because it is light on celebrities and entertainers. Instead they speak to intellectuals, scientists, tech dudes and writers who the frontwheeldrivers see as shaping and defining not only the culture of today, but the world of tomorrow (especially the cyber-world for people who will be sitting in front of computers). More impressive is the depth of some of the conversations; considering how short some of them are, these are really well done.

442EME RUE zine (members.lycos.fr/la4442rue) *Le trash!* If I could read French this garage punk zine would be my favorite mag! As it is, it's my 442nd favorite.

Go Metric zine (801 Eagles Ridge Road Brewster NY 10509) I can take or leave the ■■ pages of fictiony stuff, but the theoretical AC/DC lyrics ("Vacuum cleaner with an extra large bag/High voltage outlet for a very dirty shag...Lie like a rug") and the lengthy, irony-free reflection on WWF's 1985 "The Wrestling Album" make this a must read screed.

Hymn California by adam gnade (dutchmoney) A somewhat vague novel that uses incredibly richly detailed, lushly described (both emotionally and physically) scenes balanced with intentionally omitted portions of narrative. Though the book is memoir-esque, and about themes like aging, death, and sorta rock n' roll, what it is really about is writing. Not only does the musical "hero" actually discuss his writing more than any other element of music making, but the entire book is unashamedly ■ writerly showcase for writing. A trip to Mexico is more like a writing workshop exercise. And that is awesome.

Invincible Summer – An Anthology Vol. 2 by Nicole J. Georges (microcosmpublishing.com) Reviewing Vol. 1 I said it was" not ■■ engaging or magical that I feel I know and love" Nicole. Drop the "not!"

Jobjumper by Phil Irwin (Steel Cage) This new edition of the Whiskey Rebel's literary tribute to his own pursuit of responsible fatherhood/adulthood without limiting his consumption of alcohol, and scumrock is well served by far better graphic design than the first edition (though not particularly better proof reading) and is made a worthwhile purchase even for fans of the original thanks to two new chapters describing Irwin's efforts to feed his family without interfering with his love of looking like a biker and imbibing in vices on a regular basis. While the ebay addendum is pretty uninteresting, the chapter about the office politics (and pharmaceutical politics) of ■ data entry on good days/sweatshop-like work on a bad day job is insightful and fascinating.

King-Cat Comics and Stories by John Porcellino (www.king-cat.net) Clearly there is no less interesting subject ever invented in the history of mankind's long reign on God's green earth than getting new cats. Yet John makes us care! Meow!

Local Comics by Michael Goetz ($1, 1340 Brandywine Dr. Rockford IL 61108) "Pun"-ishingly funny (or should I say "pun"-ny).

Meteor Ogre zine (Keith Herzig 1837 N. Humboldt Blvd. Chicago IL 60647) It's like Herzig gorged himself on art genius and then vomited it up on these pages.

New York Dolls by Bob Gruen (Abrams Image, abramsimage.com) I have photo books of KISS, Elvis, the Beatles, Michael Jackson, Prince, Bowie, and the Rolling Stones and can honestly say that this blows all of them away. Never has a band been more about being photographed than the Dolls, always aware of the camera and in pose but simultaneously ■■ "regular" and kind of out of it, and in such an awkward game of dress up, that they ■■ ■■ much about cold, melancholy reality as glam-tastic artifice. Being the photographer of ■ band so image conscious, and so simultaneously beautiful and homely, Gruen was basically a member of the band, and ultimately not the least important member. This book features images so intimate, ■■ absurd, so convincing and so alive that it "sounds" better than your fave Dolls bootleg!

The 100 Greatest Metal Guitarists by Joel McIver (JawBone) McIver is the anti-Chuck Eddy. Rather than creating ■ mindbogglingly broad definition of metal (as Eddy did in his infamous metal book where Teena Marie edged out Priest and Maiden), McIver is such a purist that Van Halen, Randy Rhoads, and Slash ■■ left out in the cold. I have to believe McIver honors a pure code of guitar technique, talent and false metal-denial rather than just picking his fave bands, because nobody could like both the raw, ugly sound of Mayhem and the florid powermetal of Dragonforce. This collection's greatest achievement is that it triumphantly puts into words the majesty, bombast, swarming power, and clouds of terror emitted from the amps of Trey Azagthoth, James Hetfield, Dimebag Darrell, Kerry King and the rest, including the #1 of all time, who I will not reveal, but who hopefully will feel less like ■ bitter, slighted failure who fate has been cruel to thanks to this honor. But I doubt it.

Pajoma 01 zine (POB 2632 Bellingham WA 98227) Punk zine purity! Reviews of shows and Xerox magic and nothing else!

Pop Surf Culture by Brian Chidester & Domenic Priore (Santa Monica Press) Considering the authors one is not surprised at the triumph of this glorious, joyful exploration of American surf culture (through luxurious color photos, insightful essays, and glimpses into surf memorabilia collections that make these dudes out to be to longboard ephemera what Forry Ackerman was to monsters). The "Beach" movies are explored, surf music is examined in every aspect, with incredible knowledge, well into the 90s revival, and surf literature, surf graphic design, and surf fashion are all powerfully represented. The best pictures I've ever seen of Duke Kahanamoku share pages with the history of tiki imagery, surf inspired comix art, amateur surf documentary filmmakers, and ■ loving look at the Gidget TV show (including an intro by the real Gidget!). No surfer or surf culture fan or twangy guitar player or owner of a Hawaiian shirt can survive without owning this book, and if you don't fall into any of those categories, buy this book and you soon will!

Popular Reality zine (POB 66426 Albany NY 12206) Conspires to enlighten.

Pure Country – The Leon Kagrise Archives, 1961-1971 (Process) One of the best publishing houses in America, Process seems to specialize in books that explore the intersections of pop culture and outsiders. While their chronicles of eccentric musicians like Moondog, The YaHoWa commune/psychedelic band, and Roky Erickson were all fascinating, their explorations of fandom have been their true masterpieces. A collection of a self-destructive teen's revealing fan letters to Skinny Puppy's frontman, a chronicle of a gay autograph/Polaroid collector in pre-Mark David Chapman New York, and this luxurious volume of photos and anecdotes are some of the best books published in the last decade. *Pure Country* presents the photo archives of a man who grow up in Maryland, developing a forbidden love of Country & Western music (his parents were devout churchfolk) that brought him profoundly enviable pleasures of the soul (his humble description of the music bringing him to tears read like an inhibited man's version of St. Teresa's ecstasies). During an era when Nashville was exploring slicker, urbane possibilities, Leon Kagrise found a pair of time capsules; two backwoods parks (one on Maryland, one in Pennsylvania) where country music royalty would play casual shows for picnicking families, the slick Nudie suits of George Jones, Johnny Cash, Bill Monroe, and the Stonemans likely to get annointed with barbecue sauce as they hung out with fans. Lush color photography depicts Eden-like scenes of children sitting on stage watching June Carter, Skeeter Davis and Hank Locklin holding dolls given to them by fans, Red Smiley and Don Reno in two-tone bucks standing in the dirt by a quiet creek, and an armless pedal steel player signing autographs with his foot. Kagrise was an avid collector of C&W records, autographs, memorabilia, and invaluable recordings he made of these shows, but he wasn't a stalker; the underrated Stoneman Family (the secondary heroes of this collection) recall inviting him to join them for meals, only to be turned down by the ultra-focused, shy documentarian. They, like us, could never fully understand Kagarise's deep relationship with this music; it was so personal that

gazing upon these fabulous photos it is us that become the outsiders to a true fan's satisfying world.

Que Suerte (Apdo 18240 28080 Madrid, Spain) The world's most over the top comics anthology.

Razorcake magazine (razorcake.org) More actual words worth reading than any two issues of *MRR* (which might not being saying much).

Three Wishes by Pannonica de Koenigswarter (Abrams Image, abramsimage.com) From the early-1950s until her death in 1988 Baroness Pannonica de Koenigswarter held a special place in the jazz world. A Rothchild heiress, she moved to New York after separating from her husband, the spark of their marriage apparently dimming once their adventurous period of freedom fighting in Africa ended after World War II. An avid jazz fan, she became a presence on the scene, her beat up silver Bentley shuttling beboppers from club to club. As a muse she inspired many compositions, and as a patron she opened her homes to many musicians, particularly Charlie Parker (who infamously died in her hotel suite) and Thelonious Monk, whom she once took a drug rap for, and who retired to her New Jersey home, "The Cat House" (named not only for he "cool cats" who crashed, but because the Baroness had scores of felines). In the early 60s she began a project in which she would ask her jazz friends to share three wishes. Shelved for decades, the responses were recently edited and published, along with ■ thrilling collection of the Baroness' private photographs of jazz icons, by her granddaughter Nadine. While many of the responses are mundane (health and wealth top the majority of the lists), there are a few interesting strains. A number of artists express a sincere desire for jazz to be recognized as an artform. Pianists often wish clubs had better pianos. Satchmo wanted a break (and to spread the word about the dangers of constipation). Dizzy Gillespie wanted a borderless world "where you don't need a passport." And I won't spoil Miles Davis' response, the book's moneyshot (accompanying a crotch shot photo). Although the book's subtitle, "An Intimate Look at Jazz Greats," is accurate, the "intimate" photograph of a jazz genius may rank only slightly behind the dramatic backlit performance shot as a cliché. These overly familiar images usually show the musician looking off into the distance, deep in thought, burdened by the weight of their genius and of social injustice. What the best of de Koenigswarter's photos show are not simply intimate moments, they are genuinely relaxed moments. The photos of Monk, particularly, show a man so comfortable in his host's home that he dances, plays ping pong, and peacefully naps. The Baroness had some art school training, so he compositions are usually excellent, but these photos (mostly Polaroids) also have the charm of amateur snapshots. Certainly her camera was not an intruder or a barrier, but rather a playful prop. Similarly, the "wishes" demonstrate these artists' fondness for de Koenigswarter. Though she intentionally keeps her own voice out of the text (except for a few instances where she transliterates French accents into Pepe Le Pew dialect), her presence is felt, not merely because some wishers add flirtations, but more fundamentally in the way they take her seriously, without suspicions they might have of an outsider. Even Sun Ra gives completely terrestrial answers. Though the private, eccentric Baroness ultimately shelved this project for decades, the beautifully designed joyful volume is such a treat for jazz fans that it's hard not to think that of its publication as a glorious fulfillment of ■ generous woman's wish.

Ugly Things zine (ugly-things.com) Don't tell my editor this, but this *Ugly* magazine is better than the one you're reading. If you love good rock 'n' roll, and appreciate obsessiveness, this phonebook-sized gem is downright fugly!

Welcome to the Dahl House by Ken Dahl (microcosm, microcosmpublishing.com) Reading these brilliant, biting, hilarious comics Dahl has done over the last dozen years at first I was baffled ■ to why this comix artist -- with his tremendously clear-voice, fantastic, confident linework, and amazing writing ability (not only in pacing humor but in condensing big ideas to short, perfect comix text) is not huge? Why isn't he one of the biggest underground cartoonists on earth? Oh --- because his comix are about aching loneliness, bleak nihilism and fearless, scathing attacks on the "venal, pharisaic, parasitic, warmongering, nuclear-proliferating, deathsquad training, creation-myth-believing, racist, sexist, homophobic ruling-class pimps in Washington D.C." Maybe that limits his audience, a bit. My absolute favorute comix collection of the last few years.

Zisk zine (ziskmagazine.blogpot.com) I was reading this this on my stoop and some dudes in an SUV drove by and obviously thought it was the best baseball zine in the country because they yelled "Homer!" At least, I think they yelled "Homer!"

GUEST REVIEWS

GUEST REVIEWER: MADELINE BOCARO: **ALICE COOPER** Live (October 30, 2008 - Bergen Performing Arts Center – NJ) It was the perfect way to spend Halloween Eve. The lobby was filled with Alice clones of all kinds; young and old (mostly old), wheelchair-bound Alices, morbidly obese Alices, balding Alices, Alice in a yarmulke... An Alice wrapped in a snake and another with several bloody dolls hanging from his coat broke into an impromptu duet of 'I Love The Dead' as people snapped photos. Alice's daughter Cali walked by without even blinking. This is an every day occurrence for her! From the minute the curtain rose, the hits kept coming and the blood kept spurting. The first half was the rock show; 'It's Hot Tonight', 'No More Mr. Nice Guy', 'Be My Lover', 'Under My Wheels, 'Is It My Body', 'Feed My Frankenstein', 'Lost In America' and much more. The considerate Mr. Cooper felt a bit uncomfortable singing his anthem 'I'm Eighteen' when he should be singing "I'm Sixty!" so he did it with a crutch in hand. But he is not too mature to play air guitar with it! The only other sign of Alice's 'maturity' was when his head was bent down as he writhed to release himself from his millionth strait-jacket Could it be...??? Yes, it was a bald spot! In these days of dreadful divas and, bratty teen idols, Alice Cooper is still the greatest female name in rock n' roll! It seemed like Alice had robbed every prop house in Hollywood to fill his trash can arsenal of weaponry and implements of torture. He was always wielding something; a baton, a whip, or a sword on which he shared skewered 'Billion Dollar Babies' hundred dollar bills bearing his image with the crowd. The lengthy drum solo signaled the start of the show's second half. It's always tortuous, yet it is an absolutely necessary evil to make time for the costume changes and backstage preparations for the nightmare to come. The smoke billows, the stormy night ensues, and 'Welcome To My Nightmare' segues into 'Cold Ethyl', then 'Only Women Bleed'. Cali is Alice's beaten, bruised and bloodied victim, and she has heightened her performance by combining modern dance with a highly evocative twitching, convulsing ballet. It really is quite beautiful. The baby carriage is wheeled out for 'Dead Babies' and the suspense builds until the end of the song, when Alice reveals what mutant monstrosity is in there this time. He takes out ■ seemingly normal looking baby doll, and taunts us before turning it around to face us. It's wearing Alice makeup, and vampire fangs. (Not as cool as the two-headed wolfman baby of 2006, but a refreshing change nonetheless). This time, after placing the baby back in the carriage, he hammers ■ stake through its heart. The mother (Cali) returns to assault Alice, and the usual mayhem ensues. Three of Alice's daughters are in his show this year, and the Cooper kids certainly do a stellar job. The sublime 'Steven' and 'Ballad of Dwight' Fry are the highlight of the evening. The guillotine gets ■ respite on this tour, and the hanging is reinstated as the method of execution. Alice himself says the hanging is in fact more dangerous to perform. However, I really missed seeing the ever-evolving severed Alice head, which is revised each year. Last year's rubber Alice head was not as striking as previous ones, (in fact, it inaccurately had a tan) but it had more glistening guts spilling out of the neck, and it spat blood at a much further trajectory. The hanging was much less of a mess, yet it was quite impressive when the colossal gallows were wheeled onstage, and the floor was pulled from under Alice to the tune of 'I Love The Dead'. Alice was one of the first rock stars to present a full-blown theatrical stage act. (Wisely, he never relied on his looks to sell records!) Had the original Alice Cooper Group not been so clever, and had the songs not been so well crafted and produced, the stage spectacle would not have transcended time as favourably as it has. Of course a little comedy thrown in for good measure didn't hurt! Most folks take all this fright and horror stuff quite seriously, but Alice brings his own special brand of burlesque to the genre. The guillotine is to Alice Cooper what Henny Youngman's violin was to his one-liner act. Take my life - please! The bloodied white tails and top hat return for 'School's Out'. Then, the inevitable; on the verge of election day, we were treated to the old standard tune 'Elected'. Obama and McCain duke it out onstage while Alice and Bush cheer them on atop the drum riser. Nobody wins – Alice is 'an equal opportunity satirist'. Only two songs were performed from his incredible new release *Along Came A Spider*. Hopefully, Alice will soon construct a stage show solely for this wonderfully creepy album!

GUEST REVIEWER: GENTLEMAN JOHN BATTLES **Ponderosa Stomp** (april 29-30, 2008, House of Blues, New Orleans) This was the MUTHER of all festivals, no doubt about it. There were more true music legends under that one roof than the Chicago House of Blues has probably hosted in five to ten years. If I missed some of your faves, it's only because I couldn't be in two rooms at once, or, admittedly, ■■■ sleep deprived and couldn't remember who else was playing, even with a schedule handy...Sonny Burgess and Hayden Thompson kicked things off with a "workshop" that was more of a THROWDOWN!!! The two Sun Records veterans just made stuff up, singing classic Rockabilly numbers together, with more fervor than I'd heard in a long time. You can probably smoke and drink in church in New Orleans, but you just shouldn't be allowed to have this much fun at a Rock n' Roll show! I had the honor of sitting next to Hayden on the plane from Chicago, though he fell asleep as soon as we became airborne. Later, we found ourselves on the same shuttlebus going into town. THAT'S' when he became animated, regaling me with tales of Sun Records and his more recent European jaunts. Color me mesmerized. Barrence Whitfield, the once, frequent, and always welcome visitor to Chicago, was soon screamin' and beamin' and steamin' like he's just been let out of the hotbox. I was in the can when I heard "OW! OW! OW! OW! *OOOOOOOOOOWWWWWWWWW*, and I beat

a hasty retreat (I washed my hands, though). It was like old times, but, it was over too soon. Joe Clay put on his usual rip-roarin' set of high octane Rockabilly (and lost the pink and black silk jacket), while Dale Hawkins made with the swampy, murky Rock n' Roll sounds that gave birth to everything from CCR to The Cramps. We're glad to see Dale's health is taking ■ turn for the better, and that he's playing out more. Sonny Burgess, whom I've seen many, many times, really outdid himself, this time, with ■ wild, rockin' set that took no prisoners, even brandishing his guitar like ■ machine gun, as if to make ■ point. Point well taken. Unlike the festival in Memphis, two years earlier, where you could just walk up to Steve Cropper or Scotty Moore, I didn't see too many "Celebs" hanging out, save for Adny Shernoff from The Dictators. He asked me how I liked the acts so far. I said, "W-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-LLLLLLLLL!!!!!! I FEEL SO GOOD! YES, I DO!! GONNA BOOGIE!!! LAWD, TIL BREAK OF DAY!!!!" Only one man could be crazy enough to follow Burgess' blazing set-HEY! HEY! HEY! HA HA HA HA HAAAAAAA!!! YEEEEAAAHH MY MAN!!!!!! Roy Head upped the ante with an impossibly wild show. In ■ red suit, Head was WORKIN' that floor (I mean with his entire body, arms and legs flailing every which way!), puttin' down some savage rockin' R&B, and even closing with "You're (almost) Tuff," one of the greatest 60s Punk singles to come out of Texas (and that's sayin' PLENTY!). WHEW! Hayden was cool, when he returned to do his set, just seemingly not as inspired as when he and Burgess were playing Dynamic Duo. Barbara Lynn turned up in a few locations, always classy and confident, handling slow and fast songs with equal aplomb. Now, I WILL be publicly crucified in Chicago for saying this, but William Bell and Syl Johnson weren't doing it for me. Slow, smooth, make out music doesn't make it for me when I've got no one to make out with. I'm not saying they weren't good, I'm just saying they didn't hold my interest. Now, I dig some of Syl's 70s Funk sides and all, but, generally, if Soul music isn't at least approaching James Brown's level of ass-kickin'-ness, you will have lost me. Sorry. I know I'm supposed to love it soft, but both artists failed to jar my childlike attention span...I was reminded of Al Green, a great talent, make no mistake, though, when I saw him (I had a girlfriend, then), he made the audience do all the work. Syl's backing band was the much-anticipated Hi Rhythm section (also Al Green's main studio band), whose long intro evoked the Roller Disco era. Again, when you do nail me up from that little median between The Double Door and Flash Taco in Hipsterville, at least give me time to tell my friend, Peter, "I can see your house from here!" Mary Weiss, former lead singer for The Shangri-La's, was in the unique position of having new material that sounds as good, or better, than the original classics. And, she looked like ■ million bucks! With fifty percent interest!!! It's all over but the crying when The Collins Kids take the stage, even if, maybe, it wasn't quite on par with the devastating set they did at Green Bay. They still brought the house down, all the same. However, I seem to remember no "Whistle Bait." HUH?! Well, most artists weren't given a lot of time...Travis Wammack closed out the first night, and if you'd gone to bed by then, I have no sympathy. One of the last true Guitar Gods standing set the hall ablaze with his signature guitar sound and well-above average Cracker Soul vocal styling. He even did oddball cuts like "Karate Time" and his way out, wicked instrumental take on "Louie, Louie." He also did an abbreviated version of Hendrix's "Star Spangled Banner," but, we all know the former is TRULY the national anthem. The only drag part about this festival was that there weren't many Garage bands on the bill, though Festival Boss, Dr. Ira, has always been good for rounding up bands you never thought you'd EVER see, like the ORIGINAL Kenny and The Kasuals, Dr. Spec's Optical Illusion, the fantastic Alarm Clocks, and so on.... So, the potential ringer for the whole fest came when he scored Randy Alvey and The Green Fuz, the Texan

band who dared to record and release a 45 so delightfully cruddy-sounding that even The Cramps' cover version sounds like Murray Wilson was in the studio, hurling all manner of abuse! Who could tell what was in store? They sounded kind of interesting at first, doing an unknown original or two, then plunging into the big "Oh, No!," doing both "Gloria" and "In The Midnight Hour." Now, wait, they're both great songs, but they've been done to death, dug back up, and done to death all over again. THEN things began to deteriorate...While Alvey, who doesn't have a bad singing voice (and resembles the latter day Mark Lindsay, not ■ bad thing at all), tried to hold down the fort, the band sounded like they were quickly falling apart. The song selection only got worse. "Call Me The Breeze," anyone? Or how about "Down By The River (I Shot My Lady)." If you've got to do the immensely overrated Neil Young, there's always "Mr. Soul." Then, I think, they did a Savoy Brown tune. Nothing against 'em, but, WHY? Their signature song, "Green Fuz," wasn't great, but it wasn't bad. My man, Mike Hurtt (Oh, yeah, baby!) led The Haunted Hearts through something of a Country Music review, N'orlins style, with guest appearances by Swamp Pop King, Warren Storm (So nice to hear him with a GOOD Band. That Metal/Blues "Ghost World" band that backed him at the last fest has got to GO!), and up and coming Traditional Country singer, Maggie Lewis. This was about the only Country act on the bill. I'd hate to see what's happened at Green Bay, happen here, and have Country under-represented. It sure belongs in the equation for any such fest. I took a break, I admit, I was TIRED, went back to my hotel (only a few doors away), took a shower, walked down the hilarious "Den of Depravity" that is Bourbon Street (strip joints, bad cover bands, a Krystal Burger, open all night, where I got a bigass Coke) and went back to the show, just in time to ■■ The Mighty Hannibal, laying down ■■■ hard-hitting Soul (the kind it's politically incorrect to play for the Chicago Mod set, or probably almost ANY Soul enthusiasts these days). Even his Obama song sounded good!! In his strawboater and shades (the man is legally blind, alas), he did look like a Gentleman of Leisure, which he once was, until he tried "JEEEEEE- EEEEEE-EEEEEEEE-SUS!!!! SWEET, SWEET, JEEEEEEESUS!!" But, to the disappointment of many, he declined ■ request from Dr. Ira and a huge portion of the audience to perform his magnum opus, "The Truth Shall Make You Free," one of the undisputedly great Black Rock singles of the early 70s. Apart from that, Hannibal whooped the elephant's ass! Ronnie Spector was up next, and the excitement kept mounting. As it happened, I didn't get to see her, but I HEARD everything. I'd been invited to go backstage, which was actually upstairs, above the main stage, where I immediately had an audience with Question Mark AND Roky Erickson, at the same time!!! Meanwhile, Ronnie was puttin' the HURT on 'em, her raspy, but ever so powerful, voice bringing on all her hits, plus a beautiful rendition of "You Can't Put Your Arms Around a Memory" (the Anniversary of Johnny Thunders' demise, which took place in New Orleans, was a few days earlier), to a higher place, indeed. As it happened, Mary Weiss stopped by to say hello to Question Mark (the two had worked together in The 60s). Mary did not end up doing a duet with Ronnie, as (I think) we'd all hoped, and I did not have an opportunity to see ? and Spector together in the same room (Has anyone? Ever?!). Well, the BIG event was now upon us. A lucid and clearly happy Roky Erickson made his way to the stage (less than two minutes after saying, "I feel like relaxin' for ■ while!"), opening with "Cold Night For Alligators" and closing with "I Walked With a Zombie," how appropo is THAT for New Orleans? In between, he delivered several of his Hard-Rockin' Horror Hits, plus, of course, a top notch "You're Gonna Miss Me" and "Splash One," and Bo Diddley's "Before You Accuse Me." Admittedly, it's more or less the same set I've heard him play since he first began touring in earnest, BUT, these songs, AND Roky, AND The Explosives, sound better all the time. Roky was soaring to new heights, feeding off the outpouring of love from the audience, hitting impossibly high notes, then producing even higher notes behind them. Roky was ■■ top form, and, to my good fortune, this was the fifth time I'd seen him. When it was all over, he did NOT want to leave the stage, but, eventually, he did depart, leaving behind him ■ hole in the stage so huge, it seemed that nobody could fill it ... except...."QUESTION MARK AND THE MYSTERIANS, THE GREATEST ROCK AND ROLL BAND IN THE WORLD, BAY-BEH!!!!!!!" Yes, those were his exact words. And that night, they were. In a two and a half hour whirlwind of fan faves, boss covers, and some great, relatively new originals that still have yet to be released (Like "Beware, Joe," which I first heard over 10 years ago. It's still as good as anything the original band – who were on hand, that night and every night-ever did in The 60s). A wild party atmosphere prevailed, as Question Mark worked the stage ■■ though Iggy Pop (a ? admirer from wayback when) was in the audience, and he aimed to put him out of the business. I've seen this band rock like nobody's business every time, but, like Roky before them, they pulled out all the stops, giving the performance of their lives. You had to be there to understand how primal and intense this truly was, and again, if you went to bed before they came on, chump-ass move, sorry. From there, it all gets kind of hazy....I hung out ■ bit with Frank Lugo, Mysterians' bass player, and sweetheart of a guy, then made my leave, only to run into the woman

who'd remastered much of Abcko's output (I forgot your name, sorry, but it was cool meeting you), including ? and The Mysterians, and even the recent Rolling Stones reissues (WITH GOOD SOUND!! FINALLY!!!). I enjoyed hearing about her work, bu, it was about 5:00 am, and I was losing it. I returned to my hotel, and proceeded to pack my bags and get ready to leave for the airport. One thing you'll learn, this boy never sleeps.

GUEST REVIEWER: G. POGLIANO: **You Are The Sound** "Typewritten" EP (myspace.com/youarethesound) Today's musical climate is a morass of subgenres within subgenres, fraught with as much complexity as the cladistical system we use to give order to the natural world. Constant musical evolution creates ever more genera (roots-influenced indie) and species (klezmer-core, neo-cutesy-lo-fi, etc. etc.). It seems that most underground acts have forgotten the point of being independent in the first place: to make music without boundaries or constraints. Thankfully the tide is beginning to turn and certain acts are reviving the art of distilling a wider range of influences into ■ unique style. One of these groups is Chicago's You Are The Sound – formerly known as simply "You". Despite their youth (all are currently under 21) they have forged their own clear musical identity while retaining vestiges of similar acts that aid the audience's understanding. You Are The Sound have made the unenviable choice to identify themselves as both progressive rock and garage. We're used to hearing such music in the effete concert hall (King Crimson), the Tokyo arena (Dream Theater), and even the subterranean torture chamber (Meshuggah), but the garage?!? It may be hard to imagine before hearing the band's debut EP Typewritten, but afterwards the claim is difficult to refute. The music is complex in time signatures and song structures, yet manages to retain its rawness without resembling anything from the metallic end of the prog spectrum. This approach does have some precedent, however. Comparisons could be made to the rumbling post-punk darkness and lo-fi atmospherics of Wire or Pere Ubu. Matthew York's lead vocals slither like The Pretty Things' Phil May and drone like Jason Pierce or ■ male Nico. Bits of influence from Tool and Sigur Ros are present, though the only overt influence to be found is a bit of quasi-atonal Omar Rodriguez-Lopez lead guitar skronk. But this is really all rock critic braggadocio, isn't it? When first confronted with this band's work, most listeners will find it difficult to imagine a suitable reference point. And indeed, comparing them to any of these groups is ■ bit like comparing Ornette Coleman to Louis Jordan. The material is recognizable as a raw branch of psychedelia, and that's as far as most listeners will need to analyze it in order to enjoy it. For many it will just be good music to take hallucinogens to if they're in a mood for something harder than Pink Floyd but more articulate than *In A Priest Driven Ambulance*. And drug music it is: the band's Myspace even lists ■ psilocybin molecule under "Influences". Ironically, they decry prescription drug abuse in "Rx Propaganda.", their shortest and most consistently uptempo song (in true hipster fashion, all song titles end with a period). Apparently the new generation of mushroom and acid enthusiasts is looking for a more holistic experience than the somnambulance much classic psychedelic rock provides. The popularity of Tool and The Mars Volta in Gen Y drug culture is proof of this, and You Are The Sound ups the ante. Jeff Austin's drum parts are articulate and painstakingly arranged. Tom Meyer's nimble polyrhythmic bass conjures images of Chris Squire balancing on Shaolin poles. Together they create tightly wrapped grooves that evoke some of the more difficult to describe physical effects of hallucinogens – marrow will knife the insides of your bones, splinters will shoot through your blood vessels, and your body will move through space faster than it will through time...but in a good way. These rhythm section excursions are anchored by the comparatively minimalist guitar and vocal input of York. The music cannot be called vocal-led, but each song still has something that can be described ■ a sing-along chorus. Like Joy Division or Gang of Four (who the band sounds more than a little like during the intro to "In The Mirror, We See Bacteria."), You Are The Sound is less guitar-oriented than your average band. York fits into the collective arrangement with tasteful melodies and rhythm work that intersects punk simplicity with chordal texture, though there are some well-placed riff explosions (including a Discharge-style figure that comes near the end of "The Colors In Red."). Together they create an amazing amount of atmosphere for a three-piece with minimal effects and no keyboards. The EP contains no overdubs apart for two white-noise interlude tracks, a flute that opens "Survival.", and some musical saw buried deeply in the mix for the soft section of "Rx Propaganda." Not that You Are The Sound is so raw to be impervious to the pitfalls of any form of progressive rock. There *is* quite a bit of pretention in this band, from its oblique lyrics to the aforementioned interludes. At times the Tool-like vocals suggest New Jersey emo kids impersonating ■ group of Benedictine monks. The constant changes in tempo and intensity might be too much of a roller coaster for some, and the majority of the songs end abruptly and without much resolution. Here is perhaps the defining anecdote on the polarized reactions to this band: I attended their most recent appearance at Chicago venue Reggie's with a friend. After the band left a pint of blood onstage, as usual, my friend told me he spent half the set watching in amusement as fellow viewers tried in vain to bob their heads to the odd meters. The pure visceral impact of great, primitive rock and roll is still there, but twisted into a confusing new form that some listeners will not accept. Do the young gents of You Are The Sound fit into the continuum of the modern psychedelic genre? You bet your ass. But they do not copy any one artist in that genre, and in so doing manage to transcend subgenres, remaining unique.

GUEST REVIEWER: E.IV (photo n.VI) **Teenage Jesus & the Jerks**(Friday the 13th, Knitting Factory)

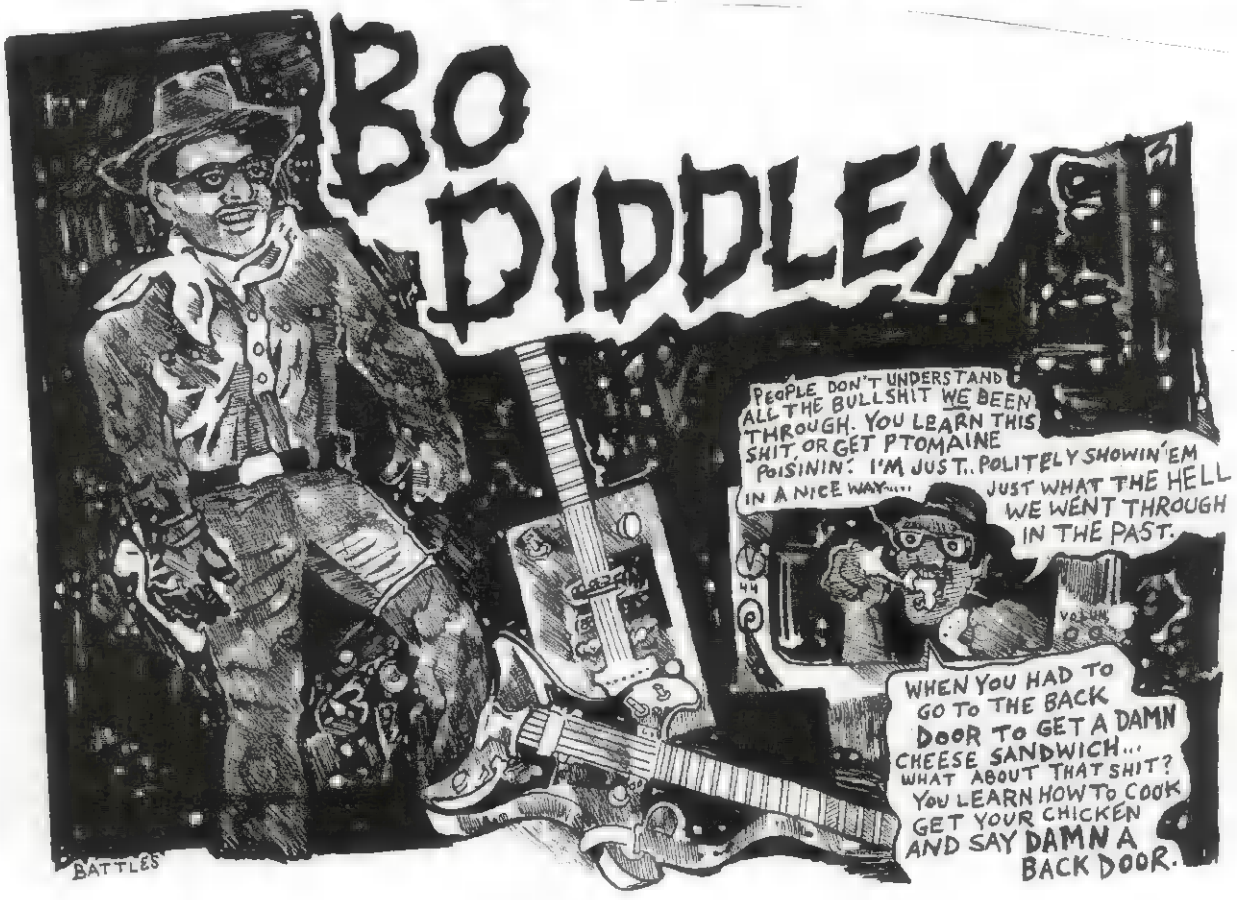
We got on the train and were off to The Knitting Factory. EARLY, lot's of waiting but ■ great DJ set. First, we got ■ couple of Stolis and went wild at the merch table. There was a great selection. Information were the openers. They used lots of different instruments including ■ vacuum cleaner. Pure no wave. It was great that they also had a keyboard player. They got me very excited to see the headliner. Information had the elements of start/stop, synchronizing dissonance and short songs. One was about 5 seconds. They played the second set backwards and also included Mars' "Puerto Rican Ghost." Kim Gordon was in the house looking fabulous. Much better in person, seemed very shy. Teenage Jesus & The Jerks were: Lydia Lunch, Thurston Moore & Jim Sclavunos. 2 killer sets! Lots of lights! Attitude! No Wave! We were in front of the stage anxious. Jim's drum and cymbal were right in front of us. As soon as Lydia stepped out the hecklers howled, wanting to get a reaction. She owned the stage right then. When someone shouted "you suck," She retaliated "I do... but not YOU." She could have easily done that all night, but that is not what she came to do. She was so focused on getting the maximum impact out of these songs. These songs have not been performed in years. I have seen Lydia live many times. I was bound to love the performance. I thought I knew what to expect. These expectations were quickly shattered. She was absolutely outdoing herself here. It was great to see her murder that guitar. The vocals were so intense. There was a precision and perfectionism to the performance. The sets began with "Red Alert" and ended with "Orphans." She was outdoing the boys, they could hardly keep up. Thurston broke a string during one of the songs. She stopped a few times to show them who was boss. Scolding them when they were not up to par and even restarting a few songs. I lost my head on "The Closet." This was the first music that I had ever heard from her. It had the same impact now as it did when I listened to it the first time. That was in Chicago at the Belmont train station years ago. I was coming back from the record store after having bought "Everything." A young black woman in a do-rag asked what I was listening to. "Teenage Jesus and The Jerks" I said as I was looking through the liner notes. She asked if she could hear it. I handed her one of the earphones and she started "rocking out." I thought it was silly, I didn't know or care if she was making fun. I got on the train and looped it all the way home. The album remained in heavy rotation for weeks thereafter. This is precisely what I needed at the time. It served as ■ companion piece of sorts to my own emotional state at the time. "Everything" was a manifestation of my overwhelming internal feelings and conflicts. Now here I was listening to these songs live for the first and last time. At the first show I could only scream along a few times then I quickly shut up. This was only going to happen twice and I felt so fortunate to be there. We went up to the balcony for the second set for a different perspective. The second set to me was even better than the first. "Baby Doll" and "Orphans" in particular. The beginning and end to "Orphans" was extended. I have never seen anyone torture ■ guitar like that and I don't want to. The ungodly noise that erupted from those strings sent the audience into ecstasy. This was the obvious crowd favorite. Seems the New York audience was used to her brand of torture and lapped it up. She assured them during the night that this was "only ■ part of the hostility I have for this city." After the show I wanted to see her. We waited around for ■ while. I asked a sound guy to bring her my chapbook and "Paradoxia" to get signed. I saw her a while later going up the stairs. We quickly followed and she took notice, greeting her "Chicago Boys." She asked, "did you love it?" We said yes excitedly. I gave her a hug and kiss without thinking about it. She was in a huge rush to leave. She signed ■ few of my CDs. She said she knew I had come a long way. She posed for a picture. After that she was on her way. I saw a girl waiting ahead that wanted her "No Wave" book signed. Lydia was about to sign it... then something seemed to turn her off. She just went on and walked away. The girl closed the book and said something like "That's what I should have expected." Maybe that's why it resulted that way.

THE FINAL CURTAIN

Gunnerman Jane [illegible] is a great fan of art and a young friend to many of the legends of Rock & Roll. Here he gives [illegible] his favorite artists who have recently made the transition from mortal to immortal.

I'd like to start out by thanking everyone who's said good things about my column, particularly Mike Stax and Ugly Things. It's no big secret the high regard in which I hold this fine zine. Thanks to all of you for being patient with me. Sometimes I'm not motivated to do illustrations, and, usually, it's just down to time. Also, the simple fact remains, even moreso than usual, a major figure in music, the movies, and TV, sometimes more than one, has been passing just about every day, so, if I missed anyone, and I will, I apologize...Thanks are also in order to our good friend, NoBunny, for mentioning me in his recent interview in Maximum RocknRoll, and to our editor, Jake Austen for quoting me in his Wreckless Eric preview for Time Out. Some good people have got my back.

Bo Diddley - You tell me, would you rather hear the trivial facts and rumors repeated one more time, or would you prefer that I try to give you some insight on what Bo Diddley and his music has meant to me, and hopefully, how that also relates to you? I hope you've chosen wisely. The beloved East Coast Deejay, Cousin Brucie, summed it all up in the fantastic *Let The Good Times Roll*, a rockumentary that digs deep into The Rock n' Roll Revival of the ealy 70s, when he introduced Bo by saying, "He's mean, he's sassy, and BAD, but he's a friend to us all...BO DIDDLEY!!!" Bo was unique among his musical peers in that, instead of moving to Chicago as a young man during the postwar job boom that drove thousands of Blacks, and poor Whites, from The Deep South to Chicago, he actually moved to Chicago's South Side from McComb, Mississippi, at the age of six. He became a violin prodigy as a child, but switched to the guitar after seeing John Lee Hooker. He began busking on the streets with The Hipsters, who, with the inclusion of maraca man, Jerome Green, would form the nucleus of The Bo Diddley Band. He also played on Maxwell Street with guitar great Earl Hooker, who probably confirmed what Bo already knew, that there was more than one way to skin a cat. There are many theories as to the origin of Bo Diddley's adopted stage name (his legal name had been Ellas McDaniel, after a minor abbreviation). It's generally believed that his name came from the Diddley Bow, a one-string handmade instrument that resembles a model for some of Bo's self-designed, one of a kind guitars. He created the persona of the big, bad Bo, which intimidated plenty of people who only knew him via the Folklore he'd created around himself. Was I intimidated by Bo? Hell, yes! It was always difficult to separate the man from the myth. My conversation with the man was limited to stuff like, "Bo, would you like some nachos?" I was at a show in Dallas, where someone was passing around a tray of nachos, which got to me, and Bo was looming right behind me. While some people have bragged about doing drugs with famous Rock stars, I could have said that *I had nachos with Bo Diddley*...but, tragically, he declined. Another time, in Chicago, he was obviously in a hurry, and charged right through my Cousin and I, like a rooster. We both nearly fell flat on our asses, but, it was comical. Bo turned around, apologized, and continued on his quest. "Run, Run, Run, Diddley Daddy!" Bless his heart, he couldn't see for shit. But, he had my back, even if we were never properly introduced. At one show, some jerk tried to get me off the dance floor. He'd decided, I guess, that I was having too much fun.



He even tried to tell me my Mom was on the phone, to which I replied, " My Mom doesn't even know where I am." Bo caught wind of this, somehow, and pointed straight at the guy, and said, "I heard they call you the Butcher's helper, because you can cut his meat better than HE can!" Then he sang a few bars of "Shut up, Woman" (obviously not a favorite among the emerging Feminist Movement when it was released, but, this time, it was directed at the would-be party pooper). A Bo Diddley concert was seldom the same thing twice. One thing was certain, of the many bands that backed him up (some great, some terrible. You can't come up all sevens every time in a crap game like that!), all drummers were generally verboten to play the "Bo Diddley Beat," it's been told, because Bo felt that, as he created the beat (Of course, our friend, Clifton James, lived to politely dispute hat claim), it would be redundant for a drummer to play it, and for him to play the same rhythm on his guitar, as well. Of course, the "Shave and a haircut, two bits" beat, and even the lyrics to Bo Diddley's self-titled debut single, were frequently said to be derived from the standard, "Hambone," which would have put Bo's classic in the public domain. Bo vehemently denied this, saying that he didn't even have "Hambone" in mind, and that it was another ploy by his detractors to keep him from receiving royalties from his music. Unfortunately, he'd also stated that he'd sold the rights to his back catalogue when he couldn't put supper on the table for his family. Bo made no bones about the fact that his live shows were basically his only source of income for years. While purists may not have always taken to the changes Bo was putting his audience through (you WOULD hear the classics, and, sometimes, a rarity or two, but, done totally different than the originals), a Bo Diddley gig, taken on it's own terms, could be a stone gas. There was one show where the drummer got close to it, only because Bo's plane arrived late, and he didn't have time for a "Pep Talk" before they went onstage. He also pointed out that his trademark black suit was still at the airport, somewhere, adding that, "the suit don't play." It was a really fun show, because a bunch of people formed a circle on the blacktop in front of the stage, and everybody had to get in the circle and do his thing. It didn't matter how good or bad you were, you HAD to get in there and dance. I would imagine, in the early days of Rock n' Roll, that it mattered less if, like today, you'd had dance lessons, and more if you had the feeling. Some people were put off because Bo carried with him a Hendrix-like barrage of guitar effects, instead of relying on the stripped-down, simple, but still other-worldly, guitar sound that he, himself, created. Still, Bo was still Bo, and, hey, guess what? Good music is still good music. And, Bo's innovations went beyond the primal guitar sound that, of course, got him signed to Chess Records, but with few exceptions, couldn't really be called "Blues." It was a variant on The Blues, but, he went back to the primal beat of African music, into the raw, jubilant sounds of the first form of Popular music aimed squarely at the youth. "They called it Rock " -Nick Lowe. It's interesting to note, that while Bo probably wanted to get his records into white households as much as his friends, Chuck Berry and Little Richard did, his music seemed to make no concessions to the white audiences. He rarely made the Pop charts (the comic cutting contest, "Say Man," was, ironically, his biggest seller), but, he went on, undaunted In later years, it would be the white Rock n' Rollers that were holding him up, though I did start seeing more Black people at his shows by the late 80s, their numbers were never considerably large...Bo, himself, commented that "There were people who looked at me, like "Well, you gotta do what you gotta do, but they never had trouble accepting me as a Brother." If it took a few years (and the arrival of The Rolling Stones, who'd done their first big tour of England with their heroes, Bo and Little Richard, plus The Everly Bros., whom The Stones also respected, even if they seemed to be more a part of The Beatles' musical makeup than their own), but Bo Diddley became a "Crossover" artist, drawing largely on a white following, after years of being denied service in White establishments in the South. A bolder crossover bid at the time, however, was bringing in female musicians. Among their ranks were, of course, The Duchess (nee Jean Wofford), Lady Bo (Peggy Jones), and Cookie (Cornelia Redmond), and, later, Bassist Debbie Hastings, who appeared with Bo on TV and in live shows for 20 years (She also turned up on the recent DVD, "Rock at 50," shot in 2003, which also features Jack Scott, Jerry Lee Lewis, Nathaniel Mayer and others). One of these TV gems was Bo Diddley's only appearance on *The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson.* Apparently, Carson didn't know Diddley...personally, that is. The two, for whatever reason, weren't introduced before the show. It didn't seem to matter, as both men played off each other remarkably well, each with his own brand of relaxed comic precision . Bo probably didn't even know how funny he was, that night.

Johnny: You know, we've never met. Tell me a bit about yourself. Are you a married man?

Bo: Uhhhh...Not anymore.

Johnny: Oh! You've been married, what? Twice?

Bo: THREE TIMES.

Johnny: *(Gets up from his desk to shake Bo's hand)* Three times! Well, I understand that before you went into music, you were a Pro Boxer?

Bo: Golden Gloves, semi-pro, yeah.

Johnny: What made you leave boxing and go into music?

Bo: Well...I figured out that the guitar don't throw left hooks!

In the 80s and early 90s, Bo became a fixture on late night TV, appeared in the most memorable scene of Chuck Berry's concert / biopic *Hail! Hail! Rock n' Roll,* an unrehearsed bull session featuring Chuck, Bo, and the always quotable (if you can keep up with him!) Little Richard. Why Chuck and Bo didn't hit the stage together in said film (as they did in *Let The Good Times Roll*) could have been a simple matter of logistics, or, quite possibly, Chuck not wanting to be upstaged (he did, after all, sabotage his own show because Keith Richard had tried to make Chuck Berry sound too much like Chuck Berry). Bo also appeared in the celebrated Nike ad with the multi-athletic Bo Jackson, played a short, but memorable role as a pawnbroker in the Dan Akyroyd/Eddie Murphy's film *Trading Places.* He also appeared in a pay per view special with The Rolling Stones. His services were frequently called on by his many ardent admirers, from The Grateful Dead (Bo, like The Dead, would become an unofficial house band for The Hell's Angels), to Creedence Clearwater Revival (he would go on to make the well-intentioned mistake of recording almost an entire LP of CCR songs by way of thanking them), to The Clash, who insisted Bo Diddley appear on several dates of their first big American tour, culminating with a big show in New York, featuring The Cramps, who also worshipped at the throne (Ivy basing much of her stage persona on the Duchess). Bo struck me as someone who never felt like he got his due as a real Rock n' Roll innovator, even though he appreciated the accolades from his fans and peers. "I was the first," he said once on MTV." There was me, Chuck Berry, and James Brown, what you'd call Rock n' Roll or Rhythm n' Blues...because, the only other thing that was happening was Country and Western, and you couldn't call what I was doing Country!" (though he was a Country music FAN). Needless to say, Bo Diddley became a genre unto himself. From the early strains of Johnny Otis' "Willie and The Hand Jive" to (horrors!) that one song by George Michael (thank God I've forgotten the title), Bo maintained a constant stream of influence over just about every musical genre imaginable. Many people, however, remember Bo for having such a big heart, performing fundraisers for Cancer research, his own yearly "Hopefest" shows here in Chicago to combat homelessness, and Florida Keys Hurricane relief benefits, noting, "This is The U.S.A. We believe in helping one another." Bo had suffered two non-fatal heart attacks, but when the Big "D" (diabetes) came around, looking to strike The Bad Bo Diddley down, Bo went ALL "Walking Tall" on his ass.

I got a story I really wanna tell
Bo Diddley's sendin' Diabetes straight to Hell.
That Bad Mr. D thinks he's won the war
But he ain't gonna mess with Bo Diddley no more -
Yeah, Uh-huh.
Now, Bo lost some toes as the fight did pass
From puttin' his foot in Diabetes' ass.
There'll come a day, and it won't be long.
That Bad Mr. D will be dead and gone-Yeah, Uh-huh.
Here comes The Big "D" talking his trash
Gonna take Dolemite, gonna take Johnny Cash,
But, it's the Bad Mr. D that died the death,
On that sad, sad day Bo drew his last breath.

BO DIDDLEY'S A GUNSLINGER, BO DIDDLEY'S A MAN, A HELLUVA MAN, M-A-N. 500% MORE MAN, BO DIDDLEY'S A LOVER, THE GREATEST LOVER IN THE WORLD, BIG BAD BO, HE'S A ROADRUNNIN' MAN, THE BLACK GLADIATOR, HE WALKED 47 MILES OF BARBED WIRE, COBRA SNAKE FOR A NECKTIE, BRAND NEW HOUSE ON THE ROADSIDE, MADE OUT OF RATTLESNAKE HIDE. BRAND NEW CHIMNEY BUILT ON TOP, MADE FROM A HUMAN SKULL. COME ON, TAKE A MOMENT TO THINK, WHO DO YOU LOVE? HEY, BO DIDDLEY! I SAID, WHO DO YOU LOVE? HEY,BO DIDDLEY! TOMBSTONE HAND AND A GRAVEYARD MIND, GUITAR GUNSLINGER, AND I AIN'T LYIN'. TAMED LIONS WITH AN "E" CHORD, USING A RATTLESNAKE STRING. ALL THE WOMEN GO WILD WHEN BO DOES HIS THING. SO! SO! I'VE BEEN TOLD. BO DIDDLEY PUT THE ROCK IN ROCK n' Roll.

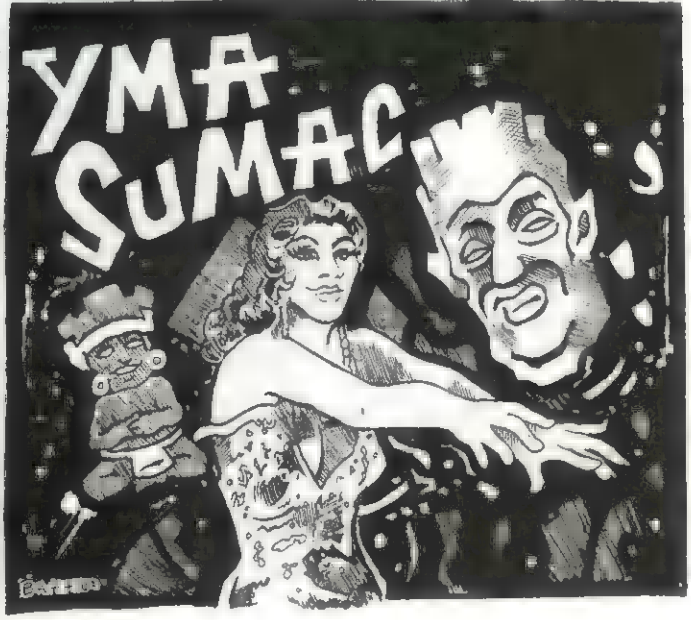
Mitch Mitchell - First let me make myself clear, don't anyone be offended, but, in the last 20 years or so, I've gone from being largely burned out on Hendrix to taking a brief, occasional, moderate interest (like when Thee Hypnotics were happening) in his work. Lately, I've been keen on his pre-fame studio work with the likes of Curtis Knight, The Isley Bros. and Little Richard. I've also become a huge fan, again, of the quasi-legit "Woke Up This Morning and Found Myself Dead" (with a heavily inebriated Jim Morrison using some very naughty words, indeed). That said, please bear in mind, I've heard Jimi Hendrix since the early 70s, when my Brothers broke out their badass Jimi Hendrix and Easy Rider blacklight posters. Kinda need ■ break. BUT, I do think Mitch Mitchell belongs in this column, and I figured it was a given that people would want to see him, here. He was a mean, mean man on those skins, no argument, there. If you ever see VERY early TV footage of The Experience, like the time they appeared on Germany's *Beat, Beat, Beat,* it sounds fresh, again. They still had the hunger, and drugs and high living hadn't got in the way, yet. Mitchell started out as a session player and substitute drummer, with the likes of Georgie Fame, The Riot Squad and The Pretty Things. When Hendrix arrived in England (and, reportedly, made the competition, being Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page, Eric Clapton and Pete Townshend, very nervous -- this was a man who, only a few years earlier, asked to sit in with The Wailers in Seattle, even offering to let them use his prized Fender amp, lest one of their amps break down. It never happened), he was "discovered" by former Animals bassist (and future Slade manager), Chas Chadler (back home, everyone from Dick Dale to Les Paul claimed to have discovered him, first). Chandler was keen to put a band together around the promising guitarist, decking them out in the finest Mod/Psych vines, and complementary hairstyles. They looked like a brotherhood, despite Mitchell and Bassist, Noel Redding, both being Caucasians. There weren't a lot of Black Rockers of note in Britain at that time, barring the still-embryonic, multiracial, Equals, who broke a major stereotype by never even employing a Bass Player! Mitchell played with The Jimi Hendrix Experience at the prestigious Monterrey Pop festival (introduced by Brian Jones), and they soon became the band to beat...or, at least, emulate, in the States. Their albums (the finest of which was their sophomore effort, "Axis: Bold as Love") were well-received by fans and critics alike, though a "Smash Hits" compilation reeks of "Contractual Obligation." Mitchell's Jazz-tinged drumming seemed to be competing with Hendrix's much-vaunted guitar stylings. The Experience broke up In 1969, though Mitchell played with Jimi at Woodstock, and in a revamped Experience with Billy Cox, Noel Redding's successor (In Band of Gypsies), including the Isle of Wight festival (which, depending on who you're talking to, was a triumph or a trainwreck....I thought it was good). After Jimi's death, Mitchell started a group called Ramatam with former Iron Butterfly (and future Alice Cooper) guitarist Mike Pinera. He played in various other outfits, and did studio work for several prominent artists, from Jeff Beck and Terry Reid to Hendrix aficionado Junior Brown. In a Bluesman-in-reverse move, Mitchell was not only screwed out of future royalties by Jimi's management, but they pressured him into selling an original Hendrix guitar. On an unrelated note, one of Mitch's original drumsets only sold for $500 in an auction. He later hooked up with Billy Cox in a new version of Band of Gypsies, and, much later, in Gypsy Sun Experience, but, perhaps more interestingly, he turned up in Sky Saxon's backing band, Dragonslayers. He played on Sky's version of Roky Erickson's "Don't Slander Me." Sky had an album called " Dragon Slayers," including previously released and unreleased material, but no liner notes, so, it's hard to say whether or not Mitchell played on any of those recordings. One interesting combo he did play with was the Dirty Mac, a supergroup that appeared in the Rolling Stones 1968 "Rock and Roll Circus" with ohn and Yoko, Eric Clapton, and Keith Richards. Mitchell was touring on an all-star Hendrix tribute package when he was found, dead, in his hotel room.

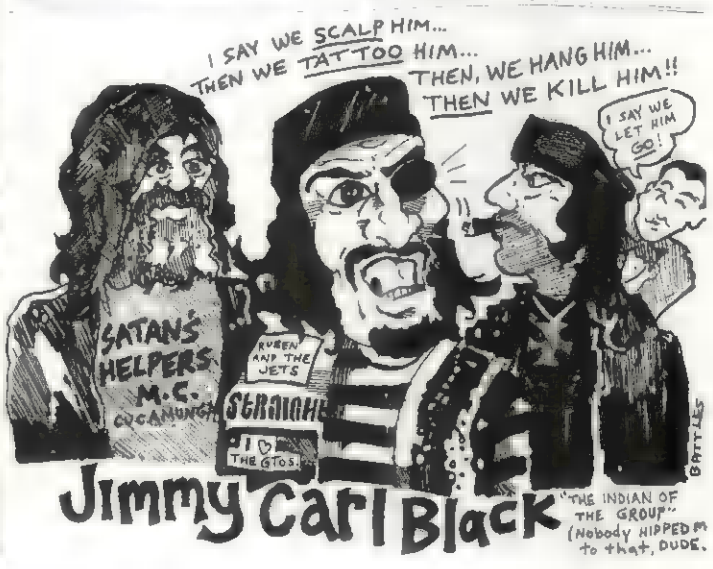
Bobby Lee Trammell - Where the late Andy Starr, and others, only dreamed about it, Bobby Lee Trammell lived to make the jump from Rockabilly wildman to respected politician. In his later years, he dropped out of music and became a member of the Craighead (Arkansas) Quorum Court and The Arkansas House of Representatives. Trammell started singing Country songs at the age of 14. Back when these things actually happened, Bobby Lee saw Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins perform at ■ local High School. He asked Perkins if he could perform a number. Sufficiently impressed, Carl told him to go see Sam Phillips in Memphis. Though Phillips, too, liked what he heard, he asked Bobby Lee to come back in ■ few weeks. That Rock n' Roll A.D.D. kickin' in, he opted to relocate to Long Beach, California, where he met Bobby Bare, and tried the same tactic he had on Carl Perkins. Though he tore into another rockin' performance ("I was much wilder than Jerry Lee Lewis or Little Richard," he said), the more inhibited Bare audience (did I just say that?), still appreciated an enterprising, entertainingyoung man, and Trammell was soon introduced to Lefty Frizell, who offered him a residency at The Jubilee Ballroom in Baldwin Park. Here, he was discovered, yet again, by famed Country Promoter, Fabor Robinson, for whom Trammell recorded the original, "Shirley Lee," ■ more restrained number with lots of commercial potential...only, not for him. Fabor set Trammell up in the studio with James Burton and Frank Kirkland, then with Bob Luman's band. The two would later join Ricky Nelson's band, carrying "Shirley Lee" with them (it's on Ricky's second album). Luman's follow up, "You Mostest Girl," charted regionally, even making the #5 spot in Winnipeg, Canada. Reportedly, when he did make it up to Canada, some time later, where the crowd went so crazy, he was pulled off the stage, when ■ female fan yanked so hard on his tie, he passed out, and was subjected to shock treatment to bring him back around. His recording contract expired, and his wild Rock n' Roll excesses made it hard for him to find work, even back in Arkansas, where he eventually returned, recording for various labels, but, finding he couldn't get airplay, as he'd been blacklisted from the radio (and club bookings, as well). Things got better, at least artistically, when he was put in the studio with Guitar God, Travis Wammack, and the great Roland Janes at the knobs. The result was "New Dance in France," one of the wildest rockers, ever. Unfortunately, the song's impact was deterred by fake audience noise. It adds to the humor of the song, of which there is a lot, but, pretty well kills most of Wammack's guitar sound (the Buffalo Bop comp, "Arkansas Twist" includes an undubbed version of the song, which also appears, as it did on 45, on "Jukebox at Eric's," one of the very first important Wild Rockabilly/R&B/Instrumental Trash comps, EVER. Still, it gives one a pretty good idea of what Bobby Lee must have sounded like on stage. An unrepentant Trammell delivered this ball of psychosis in 1965 (!!!) a million miles away from the new standards set by The Beatles. Always one for self-promotion, he began billing himself as "The First American Beatle," and later turned up on stage in 70s Elvis suits (Keith Grant Evans of The Downliners Sect told me about an infamous incident where an American Rockabilly singer, dressed in an Elvis jumpsuit, fell off the stage at the beginning of his set, and had to be hospitalized. The Buffalo Bop liners confirm that this happened to Trammell, so they're, most likely, the same story). Bobby Lee even appeared in a superhero costume at some later gigs, but after one Country hit in 1972, he only sporadically returned to the stage, before enterring the political ring. *(Thank you, Ian Wallis)*

Yma Sumac - It seems like only yesterday (OK, it was in the Late 80s...) someone was telling me about this singer from The 50s from whom Nina Hagen got much of her vocal schtick ("Nina Hagen was influenced by somebody?" I had to ask myself, with a chuckle). Around

said time, she was trying to make a comeback with an enthusiastically received engagement in New York City. Who was this mysterious woman, possessed of five octaves, and purported to be the reincarnation of The Inca Sun Goddess. Yma Sumac, you silly goose. Sumacs' vocal stylings were unlike anything ever heard by human ears, before, and, arguably, since. She could sound like woodwind instruments, or like various exotic birds. It is, perhaps, quite ▪ surprise to learn that she was such a success from the start, in the early 50s, when the charts seldom got more exotic than Dinah Shore. Her debut LP, "Voice of The Xtabay," was ▬ impressive, wide-ranging affair that still comes advised as an acquired taste (not that that's a bad thing). The highly-rated "Fuego De Ande" followed, ▬ did ▪ convincing Mambo LP (titled, simply, "Mambo."). She even went on to record what's been described ▬ ▪ "hard Rock" album, which had earlier been described ▬ "Yma meets The Stooges." The few I've spoken to who have heard it, though, said it sounded more like The Doors backing Sumac. In any case, along with her earlier output for Capitol, which is out on CD, this elusive recording begs to be reissued. Yma was born in 1922 or 1927 in Peru, though ▬ alternate (since debunked) version of her bio implies that she was actually Amy Camus (get it, read it backwards) born in New York, and that the whole "Inca Goddess" bit was just a ploy to further exoticize her image, when her 5 eerie octave voice and unconventional beauty basically had that task taken care of. She began touring with her husband's group, "Inca Tacky Trio." Her husband was often credited for playing up her ethereal image, but Yma would divorce him in the late 50s, over ▪ paternity suit brought on by his secretary, who bore his twins. Yma remarried him in 1961, but, she divorced him once more, never to remarry. In the 50s, Sumac played to packed houses, and went into films (which did little for her), and, she was ▪ natural for the television, appearing on programs like *The Ernie Kovacs Show* with Boris Karloff (!). She continued to tour The U.S. and Canada, even performing in Russia in 1961. In The 60s, she was on the comeback trail, bu, not getting very far. The attempt at ▪ Rock crossover might have been a case of "what have I got to lose" but I hasten to think what she could have done in the studio, aided by Joe Byrd, Mayo Thompson, or even The Velvets? In the early 80s, she got wind of her growing popularity, probably brought on in part, by college students discovering her records in thrift stores and alongside their parents' or grandparents' old Victrola players. She would return to her old stomping grounds, The Hollywood Bowl and Carnegie Hall. She began recording again, even appearing on the Disney collection, "Stay Awake" (that's advice kids love to hear!), but her live shows proved to be her real strength. Her later shows were reportedly, attended by Nina Hagen and, as Sumac put it, herself, "That one...I think it's Madonna?."

Jimmy Carl Black - Jimmy Carl Black is probably as famous today for being "The Indian of The Group," the group being Frank Zappa's Mothers of Invention, ▬ he is for being the band's original drummer. The title and the man are synonymous, though, I admit, openly, I didn't know Black was actually an Indian, or Native American, for years. His ethnicity was always difficult to determine, though to say he had distinctive features is like saying The Louvre has paintings. He was ▪ Cheyenne by descent, on both sides of his family. In 1964, Black was playing with LA band, The Soul Giants when Frank Zappa joined, and quickly overthrew, the band, morphing it into The Mothers, or, The Mothers of Invention for the easily offended. Black played on the band's early records like "Freak Out," "We're Only In It For The Money," and "Cruising With Ruben and The Jets." While the former dealt largely in almost formless, seemingly Fugs-influenced Psychedelic parody, the latter was an homage to Zappa's days attending Doo-Wop shows in East L.A. in the Early 60s, where he was probably one of the only Anglos to turn up regularly. In between, of course, Frank had a penchant for combining Jazz patterns with Hard Rock and often self-conscious humor. By the tail end of the 60s, he'd earned himself a reputation for being overly self-indulgent and for cracking the whip, on his audience as well as his band members. Pope Coleman recalls: "I saw The Mothers in late '67. The MC5 were the supporting band. A friend of my brother's was throwing spitballs at the stage. Frank Zappa became indignant, and demanded that the guy bring his ass up onstage. "For disrupting our musical performance, you are to sing "Louie, Louie!" Zappa fired all of The Mothers in 1969, with just ▪ phone call to Black and the others. However, Jimmy Carl later appeared as Lonesome Cowboy Burt in the Zappa film *200 Motels* alongside the likes of Flo and Eddie and Ringo Starr. Black made peace with Zappa, even recording five songs with him that appeared on "You Are You What Is." Eventually moving to Austin, Black formed ▪ house painting business with fellow Austin transplant and friend, Arthur Brown. He also played in the Mothers offshoot band, The Grandmothers, with Bunk Gardner and Don Preston (but, no Mudshark). The group played off and on for two decades, and released some material, as well. Pope Coleman (quoted above) only recently mentioned that when he met Arthur Brown after a 1986 concert that we both attended in Dallas (accompanied by about 30 people, 20 of whom split after Brown sang "Fire." What fucking idiots these mortals be), he saw a man that he mistook for Vincent Crane (former keyboardist, The Crazy World of Arthur Brown, Atomic Rooster), only to find he was Jimmy Carl Black! (The two did look remarkably alike) While Black did not join Brown on stage that night, the two were ▬ woodshedding on new projects, eventually releasing a Blues album called, what else? "Brown, Black and Blue." Right around this time, Jimmy Carl also had ▪ talking cameo in "Pee Wee's Big Adventure." He's one of the bikers who closes in on Herman, while they're deciding how to dispose of him, permanently, for accidentally knocking over their "Hogs." Incidentally, the biker mama who grabs Pee Wee and says, "I say you let ME have him, first!," after Black's hysterical cartoon tantrum, is Cassandra Peterson, aka Elvira, Mistress of The Dark. Eventually, Arthur Brown made his way back to England (after his adopted son was a bit older), and Black relocated to Italy, then Germany in the 90s. He even turned

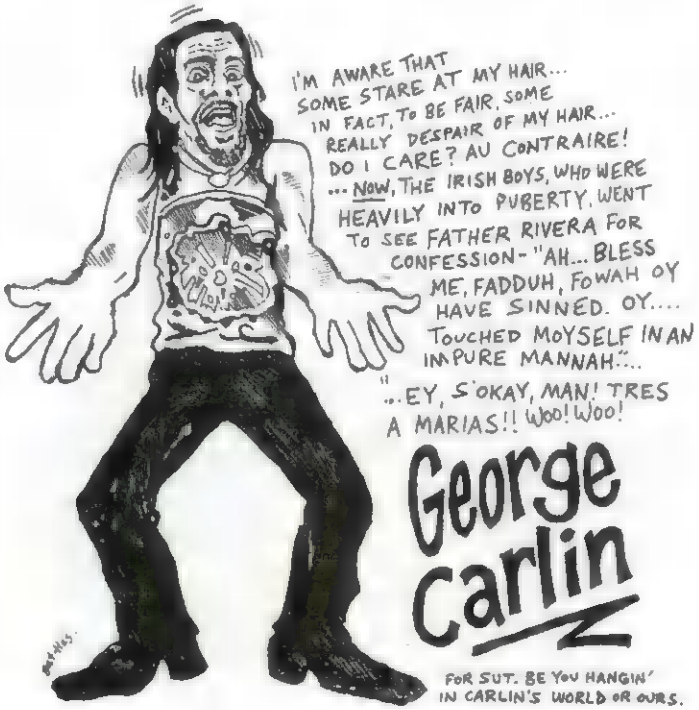


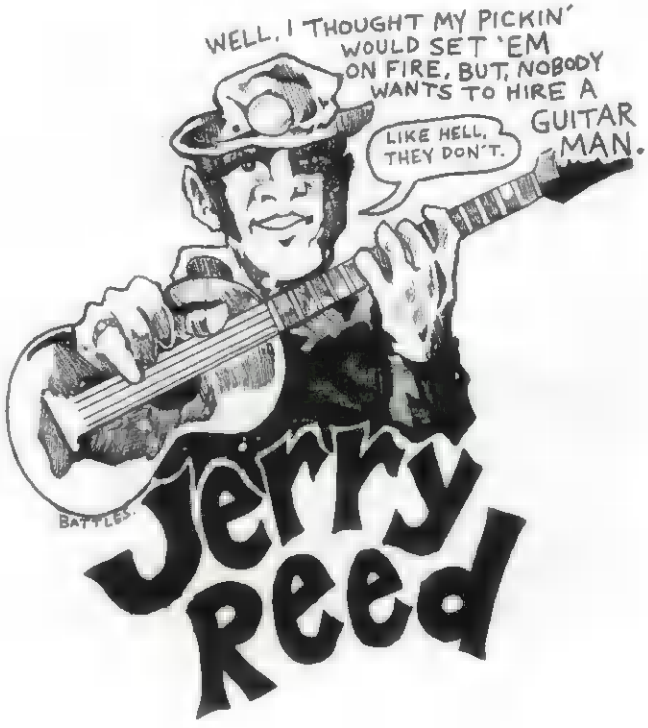


up in Liverpool, singing with The Muffin Men, a Zappa/Beefheart cover band. Recently word had gotten around that he had Cancer, which he succumbed to, in Germany, at the age of 70.

Paul Newman - Like a lot of you, when I was younger, I only thought of Paul Newman, much like his friend and co-star, Robert Redford, as the guy who made it OK to be a 50-year old Matinee Idol (which means hitting 50 is going to be a breeze. Not). Though I always liked his 70s films pretty well, like *Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid*, *The Sting*, and lesser-known vehicles like *The Drowning Pool*, one is strongly urged to go back and check out his earlier epics like *Harper*, *Hud*, *The Hustler*, and, of course, *Cool Hand Luke*. Newman proved himself early on to be an outstanding actor who could have coasted on his looks, but refused to. Newman's first film appearance was in *The Silver Chalice* in which he portrays a Christian slave in Ancient Rome who's ordered to find the silver chalice that held the cup at The Last Supper. It was not one of the more significant Bible epics of The Fifties, though it was hardly deserving of a "Worst Debut by a Major Film star" award, for which he was nominated by The Medved Bros. in The Golden Turkey Awards. As with Brando before him, it did not take Newman long to establish himself as one of the finest actors of his generation, and, not coasting, but continuing to put in fine performances in a career that spanned five decades. When he wasn't acting, he was actively involved in racing cars, even entering Daytona in 1995 as a birthday present to himself. Of course, in recent years, you'd be more likely to see his picture on his "Newman's Own " products than you would on the covers of Hollywood trash magazines at your local supermarket. The proceeds, 200 million and counting, all went to charity. Newman created a summer camp for ailing children, and took an active role in the development of the camp. We didn't just lose a good actor, we lost a good man. It's almost shocking to think that he was 80 years old at the time of his passing. He seemed eternally youthful, and, now, that's no illusion.

George Carlin - Most kids, like myself, had trouble getting a grasp on the emerging counterculture of the early seventies, which basically amounted to renouncing the Hippies, but taking twice as many drugs. George Carlin and (the recently reunited) Cheech and Chong were the road map....on a road to ruin? Not really, a lot of us younger kids didn't always understand the drug references, anyway. Many considered George Carlin hipper than Cheech and Chong, though not quite as steeped in drug culture. Older kids, like my brother Tom, listened to Carlin, whose humor was considered more intellectual than that of Tom and Dick (and I don't mean Smothers), though both he and C & C frequented the college circuit. His hip, as opposed to Hippie, stage patter owed a lot to Lenny Bruce, whom Carlin became acquainted with while still a struggling young comic in the early Sixties. When getting arrested on stage was practically becoming Bruce's nightly encore, Carlin attended a Lenny Bruce show where the police had already basically promised to put the star behind bars, and not show his fans any respect, either. As Bruce was being escorted from the stage to a paddy wagon, Carlin refused to show the cops his ID, saying he didn't believe in IDs. For his efforts, he was given a place of honor in the seat next to his idol in a Police truck. Carlin stated that Bruce recognized him, and said, "You know why I'M here...But, what did you do to get put in here with me?." When he told him what he'd done to get arrested, Bruce replied, "SCHMUCK! We both knew I was going to end up here, but YOU could have just walked out of the club!" Baptism of fire. Still, it would be several years before Carlin would discard his short-haired, sharp suited image for a bearded, long-haired, tye-dye and denim-bedecked visage. He managed to become a regular on *The Tonight Show* in both guises. A new image brought with it a slew of hitmaking albums. All of his early LPs, "Occupation: Foole," "AM & FM" and "Class Clown" contained jokes and catchphrases that have stayed ingrained in our consciousness all these years; "AHHHHHH.....BLESS ME,FADDUH, FOR OY HAVE SINNED. OY...TOUCHED MYSELF IN AN IMPURE MANNER...." Still, his brand of humor seemed passe in a manner of years. He never stopped working (He was, of course, memorable as the cabbie in *Car Wash*), but took on a considerably lower profile by The 80s. Several years later, a new George Carlin emerged, that of an angry, agitated, bile-spewing social commentator. The George Carlin of The 70s was mellow by comparison. Hell, PETER BOYLE was mellow by comparison, at this point. This was no longer the potsmokin' 70s College Circuit, as parodied in Mad Magazine (With Carlin's name, though very little else, changed to "Cool Carnal"). This was "Hell. Have a nice day, ASSHOLE!!" Carlin had crafted himself into the ultimate prototype of the Pissed Off Old Guy. Lenny would have been proud. He was more popular than ever, doing a plethora of HBO specials, one of the most recent of which was entitled, in tragic irony, "Life is Worth Losing." No one was safe when the later year model George Carlin hit the stage. Just like his earlier characterization of Biff Barf, the Wonderful W.I.N.O. sportscaster, he called 'em like he saw 'em, and if you didn't like it, too fucking bad. Carlin was not afraid to say what was REALLY wrong with this country. While it gave Lenny Bruce reservations in several of the finest jails in America, George hit his stride at a time when you could say almost anything (Presumably to an adult audience, but that didn't stop us!! Like: "SHIT, PISS, CUNT, COCKSUCKER, MOTHERFUCKER, ASSHOLE and TITS...The





seven words you could not say on television. The words that would warp your soul, curve your spine, and lose the war for The Allies." Carlin didn't just use "dirty words " to shock people. It was about trying to make people think. And, whereas he felt alone in thanking Ed Sullivan (whose show Carlin appeared on) for bringing us the Beatles and Elvis, none of us should feel alone in thanking him for breaking down some barriers in comedy and the spoken word, itself. Was he the Irish Catholic Lenny Bruce? It's not inconceivable (Not a bad name for a male birth control product)...

Jerry Reed - Though usually associated with Country Music, Jerry Reed worked up a heady stew of Blues, Rock n' Roll, and some other bits and pieces he had settin' on the shelf. He recorded Country, Rockabilly and Rock n' Roll sides from the age of 13, finally getting his first break when Gene Vincent recorded his frantic "Crazy Legs," though it was Gene himself who advised aspiring rockers such as Reed, "You've got to make your own breaks, sometimes." Jerry recorded for Gene's label, Capitol, when they were in their Rockin' Country prime. In 1956, he released "Rockin' Baghdad"(!), a fine Novelty rocker (with an intro nearly identical to Ray Stevens' smash-hit, "Ahab The Arab," which was cut six few years later. In 1957 Capitol released "The Great Empty Room," highlighted by his shuddering macho croon and bluesy, reverb-laden rhythm guitar. Reed was coming into his own as a singer, as well as a Guitarist and Songwriter, but it just wasn't his time yet. Too Country for Rock, too rockin' for Country; great music, but, neither fish nor foul. BUT Reed, who knew him some fishin', kept casting his line in the murky waters of the music business. He was hot even when he was not. In 1960, During ■ two-year hitch in the military, Brenda Lee recorded his "That's All You Got To Do." Not surprisingly, Chet Atkins later took him under his wing. Atkins produced "If I Don't Live Up To It," in 1965, for Reed. His first solo hit, and signature song, "Guitar Man," was released in 1967. Elvis Presley was so taken with the song's infectious blend of Rock and Country, and with Jerry's fiery pickin', that he used it as part of his three-part plan to get back with The Rock (Part three being a cool cover of "Hi-Heeled Sneakers, with no involvement from Reed). Elvis followed his own strong version of "Guitar Man" (which became the centerpiece of the celebrated "68 Comeback Special," the number that would connect the others together in a way that made sense musically, and in regards to a constantly shifting storyline) with a "Strike while the iron's hot" version of Reed's "U.S. Male," which had been just as good or better than it's predecessor. But, something was wrong...they couldn't get the kind of guitar sound the song called for, even with some of the finest studio Guitarists at their disposal. An All Points Bulletin went out with lightning speed to Jerry Reed. But, no one seemed to know where he was. Wouldn't you know it? He was out fishing, and didn't wish to be disturbed. After being convinced that Elvis really needed him, Reed grabbed his guitar, and made it down to the studio. What transpired was, inexplicably, one of the most maligned cuts of Presley's career...a career chock full o'filler. "U.S. Male" was as close to Rockabilly as Elvis would ever get on wax again (With the possible exception of the Jerry Lee-fueled "T-R-O-U-B-L-E."). Elvis' down south macho bravado and Jerry Reed's shit-hot pickin' proved to be a match made in Heaven. No less a figure than Gene Vincent called it "Marvelous...just like the old, pure stuff." It may not have been taken seriously at the time, but it still proved that Elvis could rock. Jerry Reed's career as a crossover artist wasn't doing too bad, either, with the aid of the Presley connection. He recorded ■ rockin' novelty side called "Tupelo Mississippi Flash" in honor of his friend and collaborator. While Reed's original was outstanding, an over the top cover version by Tom Jones hurt his chances of making a serious dent in the charts, and stickin' around awhile. Of course, from there, the hits kept coming, "Amos Moses," "When You're Hot,You're Hot," "Koko Joe" (not to be confused with the Don and Dewey classic), "A Thing Called Love ," and "Lord, Mr.Ford," all displaying his versatility as a singer, from a boss croon to a guttural growl, and the uncontested mastery of his chosen instrument. He turned up on TV shows like *The Glen Campbell Goodtime Hour*, and even portrayed himself, in cartoon form, on the Saturday morning spinoff, *The New Scooby-Doo Movies*, playing the atypical, but damned difficult to get out of your head, "Pretty Mary Sunlight," which contains ■ decidedly non-gritty vocal, and even some happenin' acid guitar. From there, Reed went into movies, his hyped-up Suthin' boy persona a natural for the comedy stylings of The 70s. While he's best known for the *Smokey and The Bandit* trilogy, he also played opposite his buddy, Burt Reynolds in the almost forgotten *W.W. and The Dixie Dance Kings*, as well as Gator, *High Ballin'* and *Hot Stuff*. Reed returned to recording, his last big hits being *She Got The Goldmine (I Got The Shaft)* (one of those rare occasions where the song lives up to it's clever title) and *The Slave*, but, intermittently, went back on the road. A recent live album reveals him to still be good-humored, if gravelly voiced, and not quite as nimble on the guitar, though even Jerry, himself, stated that he hoped his fans were there to see HIM, doing his best, and not expect the Jerry Reed of decades past. Performing as a one-man band, with a drum machine picking up the slack (big mistake), sometimes delivering chaos on a level comparable to Hasil Adkins, it sounds, if nothing else, like a whole lot of fun, which I'm sure he's having at the Great Fishing Hole up yonder.

Rudy Ray Moore -Rudy Ray Moore didn't invent what some people call "dirty words," but, he raised them to ■■ art form. He didn't invent toasting, the time-honored tradition of weaving said words into comical short stories that have been handed down, rearranged, and personalized, much like Folk songs, for generations, from Africa to urban and rural America. No, he didn't invent it, he merely perfected it. Rudy Ray Moore, or "Dolemite" as he's probably better known, laid down the foundation for "Freestyling" in Rap and Hip Hop, by giving his stories a rhythmic flare, with a constant stream of rhymes that hits his listeners from every angle." BUT," sayeth Dolemite, "Those others rap GOOD, but, when it comes down to rappin', I was THROUGH with it before they learned what to DO with it!" While the Black "Kings of Comedy" have generously given Moore his props, he accurately summed it up thusly: " They're funny, but there are only two Kings of Comedy - Me and Redd Foxx." Long Live The Kings. Before he began his Comedy empire in the late 60s, Moore recorded several kickass R&B records (as did Redd Foxx), in the Little Richard mold (Tutti Fruiti, Aw, Rudy! I always thought, listening to his Comedy records that hecould have been a great R&B shouter, only to find out later, he'd been there, done that, will do it again), and put together a sensational live show, where the focus was on music, but, slowly, comedy started finding it's way into his act. In time, Rudy Ray became a true Black entrepreneur, producing his own groundbreaking (though many didn't seem to think so) LPs and movies. The movies, financed by Moore himself, are regarded by some as naive, because they weren't as slick as, say, *Superfly* or *Shaft*, but they were certainly closer to the curb. The production values of Moore's first three films, "Dolemite," *The Human Tornado* and Petey Wheatstraw, *The Devil's Son-in-Law*, are just as raw and street-level as his records. This was about Brothers doing it for themselves. Why anyone would knock him for going D.I.Y. floors me. The "Dolemite" character from the first two pictures (I think the second is the best. Mr. Moore agreed, telling me it was his favorite) is a combination good guy pimp (which, I know, is an oxymoron) and Kung-Fu expert (and, if you've seen Dolemite in action, you'd probably say that was also an oxymoron. BUT, Rudy Ray Moore was the best BAD Kung-Fu star of the 70s). He also appears as a standup comedian: "I'm gonna tell you like the bathtub told the toilet stool. I get as much ASS as you, but, I don't have to take all that SHIT!" (To an overweight woman) "Damn, baby! If they had a fire, and someone hollered "Everybody haul ass," you'd have to make ten trips!" (To a man with boils all over his face) "You so ugly, you could stop this motion picture from running!! You could scare the STINK out of SHIT!" (Yes, it's cold blooded, but I assume the guy got paid.) Comedy was his true calling in life. To say he was hilarious would be insulting him. While he was influenced a great deal by the great Redd Foxx, Rudy Ray was saying what Redd was merely suggesting. Foxx eventually got into X-Rated humor, after Moore was established as The King of The Party Records. Rudy Ray Moore laid down the groundwork for Richard Pryor ("Some people say Rudy Ray Moore like PRYOR. But, they're a goddamn LIAR! I'm not gonna set my ASS on FIRE!") and others. Lenny Bruce used the same words years earlier, and, of course, was arrested several times (see The George Carlin obit), but Moore came around at a time when there was a demand for what some prudes call "foul language," and the Black

audience accepted someone REALLY getting down live AND on record earlier. While he did cross the color bar later on, God help ANY "minorities" in his audience (e.g. ugly people, overweight people, interracial couples...) when he walked the floor. The first time I saw him (On a super triple bill with LaWanda Page and Wildman Steve!), he was taking no prisoners. When some young Black guys in the balcony complained that they couldn't see him after he left the stage, he said, "Yeah, and you niggers shouldn't have bought the cheap seats, either!" He singled one guy out, saying, "Isn't this a fine looking young man? I know just what your old lady says when you make love to her, too. She says, "FUCK ME! FUCK ME! YOU UGLY MOTHERFUCKER, FUCK ME!!!" Here I was, one of about five Whites in the audience, with an aisle seat. I just knew he was gonna tear me a new one. But, I was saved by the blood of the lamb (or just barbecue sauce, I guess). The third RRM film, though not about Dolemite, still carries on in the same vein as his albums, an extension of the street boasts and alley toasts, like "Stack-O-Lee," "Shine and The Great Titantic " and "The Sigifyin' Monkey" (popularized later by the movie, "House Party," and, if not the best of the three,*Petey Wheatstraw, The Devil's Son-in-Law* was based on an old Folk tale about a man who agrees to marry The Devil's (hideously ugly) daughter, thinking he can trick his new Father-in-Law, and obtain the riches of the world as well as the powers of darkness. Of course, it doesn't really turn out that way (Note: There was also a Blues singer who adopted the name, professing, as did Robert Johnson, to have a personal relationship with Lucifer). This was truly the most surreal of the three films (Rudy Ray Moore appeared in other films, like *Avenging Disco Godfather* and (the Chicago production) *Monkey Hustle*, but they were not vehicles for characters of his own creation). Petey Wheatstraw walking, in slow motion, wielding The Devil's magic cane, doing good deeds (unauthorized by Satan, of course), like averting an accident where a young boy would have been run over by a car , THEN punishing the careless boy, and his friends, by running an afro pick through their hair (?!), though easily filed away in the realm of fantasy, inspires reactions of "What the fuck did I just see?!" after repeated viewing. After his brand of comedy was deemed passe, the films and records stopped happening. It SURE didn't happen overnight, but Dolemite Fever started catching on again, with Hip Hop fans and White Rock n' Rollers, by way of the aforementioned use of "Signifyin' Monkey" in *House Party*, the use of trailers for "Dolemite" on "Bent, Batty and 'Bnoxious" (The title says it all!), a non-genre specific comp that wears the crown for psychosis and patience-testing, and collaborations with the likes of Eazy-E, Big Daddy Kane, Dr.Dre and 2 Live Crew. Many of his albums were being reissued (on cassette!), and his movies were being re-released, too. His standup comedy routine was in demand again, and he was turning up on TV shows like *Arsenio Hall, Martin*, and, yes, *Chic-A-Go-Go*. It was a proud moment, indeed, when Dolemite graced us with his presence. He was VERY good with the kids, and he did, of course, a G-Rated version of his usual act, but, of course, it didn't matter, we all had more fun than the law should allow. And, that's how I'd like to remember The Bad, Bad, Dolemite, Petey Wheatstraw, The Devil's Son-in-Law, The High Sheriff of Hell, Rudy Ray Moore, The King of Comedy. I AIN'T LYIN'!!!!! NOTE: Not only was Rudy Ray Moore the King of Comedy, he was also the King of Merch. The first time I saw him, I asked the guy at the merch table if they had any T-shirts. He said, "No, we just have CLOCKS!" "Clocks?" I asked, and he showed me. A dimestore clock, with RRM's picture, that read "THE DOLEMITE TIME!!!" It came in a cardboard box with ■ photo of Rudy Ray and some naked ladies circa "Dolemite For President," and his lascivious version of "T'was The Night Before Christmas," both glued-on by hand. Can you say, "SOLD?" The clock has served me well for about 15 years. It stopped working right after Rudy Ray Moore passed on, and I ain't lyin' a POUND. The second time I saw him, in San Francisco, he had an INCREDIBLE merch table...T-shirts (I should have opted to buy an original poster from "Petey Wheatstraw" instead), DOLEMITE BACK SCRATCHERS, original Kent Records 45s of "The Turning Point" (an insane Funk/Rock Instrumental with Rudy Ray shouting "THIS IS...THE TURNING POINT!!!") b/w "The Great Pretender" (getting back to his "music for makin' babies" roots), signed, for only 50 cents. But, it gets better, ■ small table was covered with items like cassettesby lesser-known acts on the Kent label, and all manner of side of the road flea market items" like a cheapo VHS tape of an obscure Bela Lugosi movie (the kind you'd find at Woolworth's at the time), and even ■ sealed, two-cassette "Best of Pat Boone" collection!!!! Of course, Dolemite later got his thing really together, in regards to T-shirts, DVDs, photos, posters and the rest. "BUY MY SHIT! IF YOU DO, I WISH YOU HEALTH AND HAPPINESS. IF YOU DON'T, I WISH YOU SEVERE CHEST PAINS! IF THAT WON'T DO IT, HEMORHOIDS UP ON YO' ASS!!!!"

Richard Wright -Richard Wright is probably best known for the hallucinogenic keyboard sound he contributed to Pink Floyd's first two albums. The band went through many changes after their "face" and creative force, Syd Barrett, left of his own accord. Wright remained, as before, a prominent factor in the creation of the group's sound. An outstanding number from "A Saucerful of Secrets " (produced with minimal involvement from a mentally deteriorating Barrett) was "Set The Controls For The Heart of The Sun," which featured Wright's keyboard sound to hypnotic effect. It no longer resembled the childlike fancies of Syd's remarkable, if doomed, visions, but it remained an extension of the earlier group's fascination with space travel.Strangely enough, Greg Shaw stated in *Bomp* magazine that "Set The Controls" fell just short of being an outright ripoff of labelmates, The Standells', experimental, anti-war song, "All Fall Down." One may have influenced the other, but neither song particularly sounded alike. On the other hand, The Alice Cooper Group would later record "Black Juju," with an organ part directly copped from "Set The Controls," though done in a flattering way. In their earlier incarnation, as The Nazz, Alice and his boys met, and even jammed with, Pink Floyd, when Syd Barrett was on his last leg, but, still touring and performing. The Flaming Groovies also counted themselves as fans, hosting ■ post-Barrett Floyd for a PBS taping at The Old Fillmore, which The Groovies had been booking and maintaining. Roy Loney, former lead singer for The Groovies, once told me, "Pink Floyd are not great musicians by any stretch of the imagination, but they're good late night music. It was too bad that Syd wasn't with them anymore, because we were all big Syd Barrett fans, but it was pretty cool to see them with, like, eight other people." Of course, their "Live at Pompeii" concert film is better known, today. I tried to sit through it, once. I don't know who I was trying to fool. The MC5, too, were reportedly big fans, which Wayne Kramer recently confirmed. Their albums, as well as their shows, became increasingly self-indulgent. After some moderate success with albums like "Atom Heart Mother," "Meddle," "Ummagumma," and the soundtrack to "More," "Dark Side of The Moon " would go on to become one of the biggest-selling albums in Rock. With the advent of synthesizers and other electronics, Wright's role became increasingly important, even if, like me, you may find this album difficult to get through, today (with or without a video *of Wizard of Oz* in the foreground!). Later albums carried on in the same vein, increasingly plodding and remarkably depressing, but, that's all down to your musical preference, I suppose. Millions purchased the albums, and they all received generous FM airplay. The band did something unique, all the same. It's true that they didn't sound like any of their 70s Rock peers, and they made no concerted effort at cultivating an "image." "Shine on, You Crazy Diamond," of course, was conceived after an unexpected visit in the studio from Syd Barrett. The song seemed to offer a faint glimmer of hope, despite the fact that they appeared to be taking a few digs at him, too. Of course, Barrett would never play music again, though he had recorded two solo LPs with the help of his former bandmates. The band began the first of several disputes that, this time, threatened their very existence. During the touring and making of the phenomenally successful "The Wall" Wright was nearly ejected from the band, permanently (at the instigance of Roger Waters, who would, himself, leave the group in a couple of years). Wright was reduced to being a session musician on "The Wall," and was not at all involved in the making of "The Final Cut," but he returned upon Waters' departure to make ■ few more albums, tour (one of the first to ask a then outrageous $100 for tickets, and even resurrect early Floyd songs like "Interstellar Overdrive." BTW, I still think $100 to see a show IS

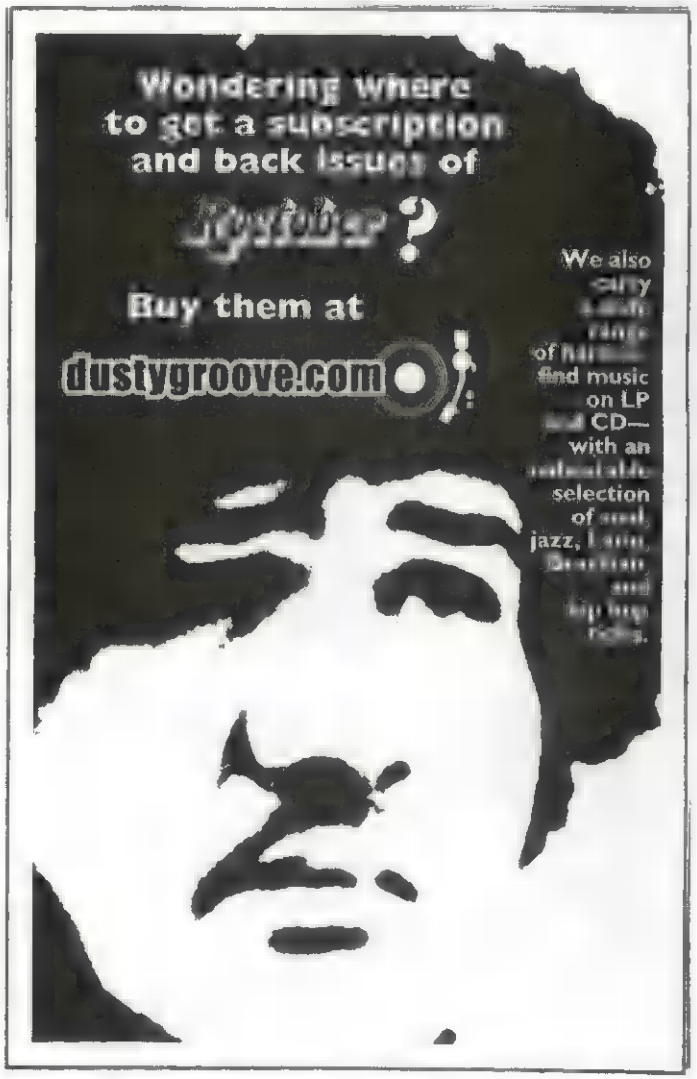
outrageous). Pink Floyd was surviving as a three piece, but the "Classic" lineup (Barring Syd, of course) put their differences aside to perform at the charity show, "Live 8" in London. Syd Barrett apparently knew about the show, but was very ill at the time. Whether he saw it is anyone's guess. David Gilmour fronted a concert, featuring Richard Wright and Roxy Music guitarist, Phil Manzenera, that featured a tasteful tribute to Syd, with David Bowie singing a not surprisingly strong "Arnold Layne" with Wright perfectly replicating the trippy keyboard sound of yore. Wright was felled by cancer, but, at his family's request, further information about his death has not been forthcoming. Like Barrett, he did have something that was quite magical. Today, the two have surely returned to the point of original joy, where a man can return to childhood, not in transgression, but, in evolution. Or, maybe, they're just down at the pub.

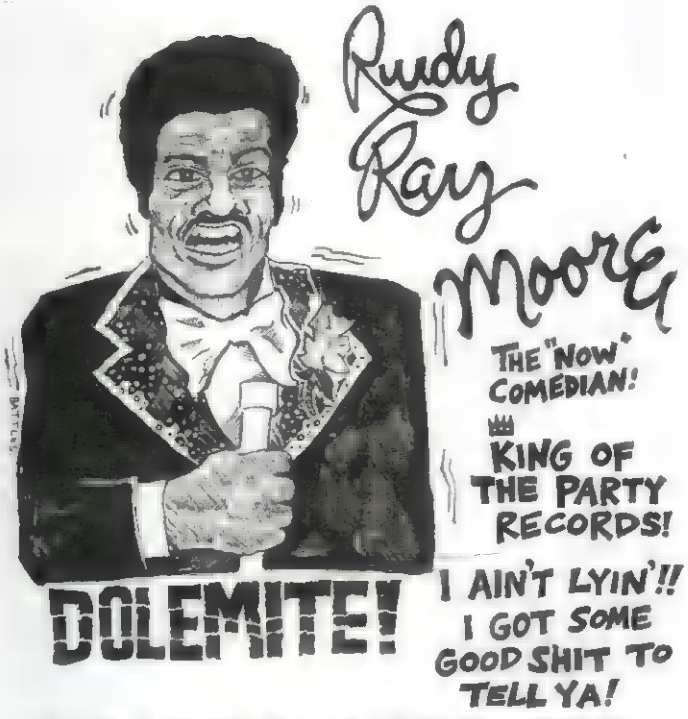
Isaac Hayes - Isaac Hayes first made his mark as a Songwriter/Producer/Arranger, with partner, David Porter, for Stax Records. Their biggest hit, "Soul Man," by Sam and Dave, cemented their reputation. Feeling confident enough to stake his claim, Hayes released his first album, "Hot Buttered Soul," which went Platinum. Hayes' recordings were just as noteworthy for his sexy, Deep Soul voice as the actual musical content. His vocal style would go onto make him an arch-rival to Barry White (I don't know from men, but, it's hard to imagine White starring in more women's fantasies than Hayes, but, what do I know?"). His monument is "The Theme From Shaft," and if you doubt the ubiquitousness of this song, I was in a talent show at the Catholic School I attended, and "Shaft" was used in three routines! Imagine, aspiring Catholic cheerleaders dancing to " This cat, Shaft, is a BAAAAAAAAAD Mother.....Shut your mouth! I'm just talkin' about Shaft! An we can dig it!" Years later, Bart Simpson would further immortalize the song by singing a Karaoke version. Of course, cartoons cemented his immortality when he accepted the part as "Chef" on *South Park*. He stated that he almost didn't accept the part, thinking it to be a cornball Disney job. Nothing could have been further from the truth. His cookin', advice dispensin', and heavy, heavy lovin' served as an inspiration to all the boys in South Park ("All you need to know about Lesbiani s that they only like other lesbians!," "If you want to make girls like you, you've got to find the clitoris!" "(singing) When a man loves a woman...and a woman loves a man...Well, sometimes the man doesn't really love her, but he says that so he can get some action...and he says, 'I love you,' and she says, 'I gotta go to the bathroom.' So, you wait and you wait and you wait and you wait and you wait...and you wait and you wait and you wait...and you wait and you wait and she's still goin' to the bathroom!" Isaac reached a younger audience, and *South Park* ratings went through the roof. It was a win- win situation. Still, after several successful years, Hayes walked out after an episode that openly lampooned The Church of Scientology aired, on the grounds that he credited his success (including his success on the show) to his becoming a Scientologist.

Bennie Thurman - Bennie Thurman was the first bassist with The 13th Floor Elevators, and their immediate predecessor group, The Lingsmen. A former Marine, before America's involvement in the Vietnam conflict had truly escalated, Thurman was known to be more confident, and proficient, on his instrument of choice, which was the electric fiddle. Nevertheless, he graduated from The Lingsmen (who never released any recordings) to The Elevators with flying colors (and I DO mean "Flying colors"), though his stint with the band proved to be relatively short. Singer/guitarist, Roky Erickson, was "discovered," Lana Turner style, at the legendary Jade Room in Austin by the members of The Lingsmen, who were keen to start a new band with Roky as their frontman. I once met a man in Dallas who claimed he was at the club on that truly historical night. Erickson, it turns out, was already in another established Teen Punk band called The Spades, who'd recently released the original version of "You're Gonna Miss Me," but, were not deemed by some as being worthy of his talents. The word on the street was that Roky was looking for an option. "These cats came up to me ." Erickson later said." "And they said, 'Roky, we want to start a supergroup, and we want you to be our lead singer...and, when they started pickin', I said, 'Too much." Under Tommy Hall's chemical intervention, The Elevators became one of the most influential, and ill-fated, of all Sixties bands. Surprisingly, the first casualty of note was neither Roky nor the late Stacey Sutherland, both of whom were later incarcerated (Roky in the state mental institution, and Stacey in the penitentiary, both for possession of two joints). Like the others, Benny was doing copious amounts of acid (though drummer John Ike Walton backed away from the drug after a bum trip, his second. His stance regarding LSD affected his relationship with the others deeply), but he was also taking large amounts of speed (which had yet to fully saturate the drug culture in Texas, California, and other places). He began to suffer muscular spasms and severe paranoia. Still, he would voice his discontent with the idea of the band translating various aspects of the LSD experience into music. He arrived at a gig with his hair badly cut extremely short, and his eyebrows completely shaven. Then, he made his exit, with apparently little fanfare. Though he would occasionally see his former bandmates, he had left the band of his own accord. It is doubtful that he played on very much of "The Psychedelic Sounds of The 13th Floor Elevators," the band's debut LP, as all of this was going on during the album's

conception. His replacement, Ronnie Leatherman is now believed to have played on the majority of the record (the album itself had no band credits, apart from that of songwriters. The LP sleeve and liner notes are milestones, but there weren't even any photos of the band. Perhaps this was done in an effort to heighten their "mystique," that very mystique that put a dent in potential record sales. The Chocolate Watchband suffered dearly from the same poor marketing, though The Elevators' second album contained full band credits and photos). Later, when Thurman heard of the band's adventures in San Francisco, he high-tailed it to "The Promised Land," itself already becoming a haven for con-men and dealers of bullshit drugs. Anyone who lived in Haight/Ashbury at the time will tell you the Hippie dream didn't last very long. Benny reinvented himself as a Psychedelic Street Preacher, prosthelytizing about his own acid-induced visions and how they related to passages in the Bible. The very things he objected to in the Elevators. He wasn't alone, though, Stacey Sutherland also stated, in his last known interview, that he thought the band was treading in dangerous waters, combining Christianity with psychedelic drugs. The remarkably decorated, leather-bound Bible he carried with him (Which can be seen, in color, in the Eye Mind book), became his trademark. Thurman dropped out of music for several years. He turned up in Texas in The 70s, playing with local bands, most notably Plum Nelly, the only post-Elevators group he released anything with (one live cut on a compilation LP around 1974). It's also been said that the group recorded an LP for Capitol, which may have never been released). Bennie did not participate in any of the group's reunion attempts (In 1972-3, 1977, and 1984, respectively. He was, however, misleadingly put on the bill at the 1977 show). He later went into hiding again, turning up just a few years ago to accept an open invitation to appear at a panel discussion on The 13th Floor Elevators at the South By Southwest Festival. All surviving ex-members were invited to take part. They didn't all show (though, reportedly, plane fare would have been taken care of for those living out of state, I'm told it was a rather incoherent affair). Thurman went into hiding, once more, it seems, and the word got out that the Elevators' bass player had taken ill, but that information was of little help to fans, as the band, at that time, still had three living ex-bass players (Dan Galindo, their third bassist, passed away a few years ago). Benny was, of course, still alive, and widely quoted, when Eye Mind, a truly indispensible work, hit the stands. His demise quickly reached The Elevators' legions of fans. He is held in high regard for his bass lines on "You're Gonna Miss Me," possibly the perfect Rock n' Roll record, and it's flipside, "Tried To Hide," arguably superior to the better-known LP version, partly because of Thurman's standout bass parts. Perhaps the answer was hidden in the words of that very song: "But, when I got near, all I saw was fear, and I know that you tried to hide, and you cried cause you lied about it." The Elevators all fled, at some time or another, to places like Kerrville, where it was possible for them to maintain a lower profile than they had in Austin. A troubled soul in troubled times, may his soul find trouble no more.

We'll also miss: Nathaniel Mayer, Miriam Makeba, Lloyd Thaxton, Jerry Wexler, Jerry Reed, Bernie Mac, John Phillip Law (Barbarella, Danger: Diabolik, Skidoo, The Golden Voyage of Sinbad.), Buddy McDonald (Our Gang), Nappy Brown, Ronnie Drew (lead Singer- The Dubliners, who did the definitive "Whiskey in The Jar"), Cherry Smith (sang with Bob Marley's Wailers-'63-'66. Not officially recognized as a member), Larry Harmon (obtained the rights to the character of Bozo, whom he performed as for decades, and licensed others to do the same, all over the U.S. He also ran for President, in the guise of Bozo. It had been done before), Norman Whitfield (Motown Producer/Songwriter), Henri Pachard (aka Ron Sullivan)-director (The Bizarre Ones, The Devil in Miss Jones), Girard Damieno (director-Deep Throat), Merl Saunders (keyboardist- Jerry Garcia Band), Danny Dill (wrote "The Long Black Veil"), Don Helms (steel Guitar player for Hank Williams' Drifting Cowboys) Dee Dee Warwick, Levi Stubbs, Edie Adams, Neil Hefti (composed "Batman" theme"), Frankie Venom (Singer, Canadian Punk band, Teenage Head), Cliff Nobles (singer), Hans Richter (German Actor), Jean Delannoy (Directed 1957 adaptation of "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," aka "Notre Dame De Paris."), Harvey Korman, Dick Martin ("Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In"), Will Elder (MAD, E.C. comics, created "Little Annie Fanny" for Playboy), Bill Coday (Chicago R&B singer- actual song title: "Her Love is Good Enough to Put in Collard Greens."), Yves Saint Laurent, Sonny Okosun (Nigerian music star), Robert Rauschenburg, Eddy Arnold, Jerry Wallace ("Primrose Lane," "How The Time Flies."), Sandra Elaine Allen (World's tallest woman -7' 7 1/4"), Roger Dean (John Mayall's Blues Breakers' guitarist -- first LP). Also the first electric guitar player from The West to perform in Mainland China. Not to be confused with the Phantasy artist of the same name), Earl Lee Nelson (Bob and Earl, Hollywood Flames), Bobby Durham (drummer-Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Oscar Peterson, Lloyd Price), Dave Powers (Emmy-winning TV Director), Mel Gallery (guitarist, Trapeze, Whitesnake), John Furlong (the voice of Russ Meyer!), Kermit Love (Jim Henson collaborator. Not the inspiration for Kermit The Frog), Kermit Scott (Friend of Henson's.and, yes, Kermit The Frog's namesake), Alfonso Dante (Lucha Libre star), Lee Young (drummer-Les Paul, Fats Waller, Benny Goodman, Nat "King" Cole, Lionel Hampton, etc), Graeme Crallan (drummer Britsh Metal/Punk band, TANK), Bud "Barracuda" Browne (early Surf Filmmaker), Harriet Burns (first Woman to work at Disney's Imagineering Studio),Craig Valentine Flessel (cartoonist-Playboy and Boy's Life!), Jo Stafford, Charlie Walker ("Pick Me Up on Your Way Down," "Who Will Buy The Wine"), Bill Melendez (animator-Warner Bros., "Peanuts" series, "Voice" of Snoopy and Woodstock), Gilbert Moorer (The Esquires), Wonderful Smith (did the popular comedy bit, "Hello, Mr. President ," directed at LBJ, and had a bit part in "This is Spinal Tap.), Ralph Young (Sandler and Young), Buddy Harman (first Drummer at The Grand Old Opry), Phil Guy (blues Musician, and Buddy Guy's brother), Pervis Jackson (The Spinners), Steve Foley (drummer, The Replacements...bad year for drummers!)





ALAS, MORE CURTAINS DESCEND...

R&B legend **Nathaniel Mayer** kicked off his career with a sizeable hit, "Village of Love," at the age of 18, on the Motor City-based Fortune label, which also produced fiery wax on the likes of Andre Williams and Nolan Strong and The Diablos, as well as crazy Country Boogie Woogie from Roy Hall, Skeets McDonald, and Johnny Buckett. "Village," in truth, is not really a rocker, as much as a Gospel-tinged Doo Wop styled medium tempo smoocher, the kind that's found favor with the Oldies crowd that populates the PBS specials, and similar package shows across the country. A follow up, "Leave Me Alone," was met with less success, though Mayer kept recording for Fortune, in search of that elusive hit. Sadly, it never came and he never became a nationally established performer in his own right. Sadder still, there is no official comp of his Fortune sides. As with Andre Williams and others, there may be bootlegs floating around, chock full of strong material. In time, Nate (his other nickname being "Nay - Dog") went forgotten, unaware, for years, that anyone was even listening to his old records. Scott Morgan of The Rationals, Sonics Rendezvous Band and Powertrane recalls, "It was in the early 70s when I first saw Nathaniel. I went to see Mitch Ryder's band, Detroit. Ryder introduced Mayer from the stage, he comes out, doing The James Brown up to the mike, and he just kept that thing going. He sang his ASS off. He put more energy into that one song than most people do into an entire set!" But, little victories like that were few and far between. However, a new millennium began, and, with it, new fans came out of the woodwork. A CD of strong new material, "I Just Want To Be Held," recorded for Fat Possum Records, under the direction of bandleader and good guy, Jeff Meier, was released in 2004. Mayer began to play out, in support of the CD, and the air was thick with anticipation. If Andre Williams, and Fat Possum acts like R.L. Burnside, Junior Kimbrough and T- Model Ford, could reach a wider, younger audience, what was stopping Mayer? His Chicago performance had "triumph" written all over it. Nate, in all his sartorial splendor, transcended the funky trappings of The Empty Bottle stage. In a white tuxedo and glittering Esquerita shades, he James Browned up, down and ACROSS the stage, seldom letting up from that original energy and master showmanship Scott Morgan spoke of. I introduced myself to him before the festivities commenced, noting that, We have mutual friends in Danny Dollrod, and Bootsey X," (nee Bob Mulrooney, who'd later become Nate's drummer), "all those crazy guys..." He smiled real big, and said, "YEAH?! THEN, I MUST BE ABOUT A CRAZY MOTHERFUCKER, CAUSE THEY'RE MY FRIENDS, TOO!" Meyer was soon appearing in New York for the Norton Records-sponsored Soul Cavalcade of Stars, featuring Nathaniel, Andre, The Mighty Hannibal, Gino Washington, Lonnie Youngblood, and even Rudy Ray Moore. Word has it that it was Nate's birthday, and a whole hell of a lot of performers helped him celebrate, hindering many of their performances (Barring Andre, who actually stayed sober). The Nay-Dog did like to have his fun, arguably, too much. He never seemed to be able to pick up on the momentum created by the studio album. He wouldn't return to Chicago for about three years. And, when he did, he did not receive the previous hero's welcome. He was not his jovial self, either. He seemed withdrawn. While he still turned in a fine show, and he went over all right, it was plain to see that the majority of the audience was there to see the current crop of Detroit bands also on the bill. He turned in a yearly performance The Ponderosa Stomp in New Orleans, until, early in 2008, a series of strokes forced him to cancel his billed appearance, which would have made such a galaxy of stars shine that much brighter, but behind Nathaniel Mayer's raincloud, there was another raincloud. Friends said that he tried to project, with what little mobility he had, that he was trying hard, as they say in Detroit, to keep on keepin' on. And keep on keepin' on he did, until he just couldn't keep on no longer. A memorial benefit concert was held in Detroit for Nathaniel Williams, featuring a reunion of Black Rock pioneers, Black Merda.

Betty (nee "Bettie") **Page** represented a lot of things to a lot of people. Most people will tell you it's the unlikely combination of confidence, domineering and innocence in the way she presented herself on film that really made her as sexy as she, most assuredly, was. Of course, others, too will tell you her piercing blue eyes, exquisite coal-black hair and trademark bangs had something to do with it, too. Someone once said that Marilyn Monroe broke down barriers because she made sex no longer taboo, but, more like ice cream...the things Miss Betty represented were definitely still taboo in the 50s, but she seemed as though she actually enjoyed her work. Like she was, in fact, eating ice cream. Marilyn was the acceptable face of slowly emerging sexual freedom. Betty's face and form were more than perfectly acceptable, thank you, and she made the world's #1 Sex Symbol seem positively vanilla by comparison. That's not a put-down, we're just talking opposite sides of the same coin. Even growing up in Smalltown U.S.A., Miss Page's life experiences, sadly, never lent themselves to a happy and healthy sex life. She was sexually abused by her father, and, later, gang-raped (depicted, though not gratuitously, in *The Notorious Bettie Page*, one of the better bio-pics of it's kind). When Irving Klaw (who owned a studio for amateur photographers to take girlie pics, and distributed photos and films, "The Kind Men Like.") took her under his wing, first as an amateur photographer's model, then in short film loops, and, finally, full-length Technicolor Burlesque features like "Teaserama" (also featuring the devastating Tempest Storm, and unbelievably weak comedy bits with the beloved Joe E.Ross). Klaw was constantly running afoul of the law, much of the material he was releasing commercially fell under the banner of illegal pornography, as tame as it looks by today's standards. Admittedly, the first time someone showed me an original 50s Men's Mag devoted solely to Betty, some 25 years ago, I thought, "Wow, she sure is a knockout, but, I'm not diggin' her tied up too much." That's just me, I've met members of the Fetish community, and they were all nice people. Betty's work with Klaw brought the Fetish community closer to the surface, and if you think decent American folks weren't ready for Rock n' Roll, you can imagine how they would have responded to Betty and her friends walking around in 7" high heels or in various bondage positions, still looking like it was all in fun. Of course, a large number of her films dealt with her posing or dancing in (usually black) lingerie, or, on very rare occasions, nude or semi-nude (though, carefully concealed. I don't think Klaw wanted to go to jail THAT badly). Betty went on to become the fledgling Playboy magazine's second-ever Playmate of The Month, after Marilyn Monroe, and she turned up in other men's mags, the kind that usually weren't being confiscated by G-Men. She tried marriage, with disastrous results and, at one point, simply disappeared. She was said to have found religion, but, apart from that, no one seemed to know where she was or what she was doing, in terms of a livelihood or her personal life. If she had been truly ashamed of her past work, she probably would have made at least one final public statement before doing a fade. It would be decades before her cult following would take root, and people would begin to ask, who, and where, is this Betty Page, who's turning up in graphic arts, comic books, tattoos, reprints of her old magazines and 8 10's, the fine fanzine, *The Betty Pages*, among others, and all manner of product, not to mention movies (a Betty clone appears in *The Rocketeer*, and the Rocketeer artist Dave Stevens, who recently died, was one of the great champions of her revival). And, of course, Rock n' Roll, starting with Chris Spedding's "Hey, Miss Betty" and later songs like "White Women" by Plan 9. Her image, today, is synonymous with Rock n' Roll, even though her disappearance was concurrent with only the early rumblings of that sound. Women all over the world now are trying to imitate, or appropriate, her look. I've seen maybe one or two actually pull it off. Finally, a few years back, Betty broke the silence, appearing on TV in a recorded statement, explaining that she did appreciate all the interest, but preferred to remain anonymous. She also made it clear that she was still a Christian, but was not ashamed of her past career. She declined to be photographed at the time, feeling that fans of the young Betty might be disappointed to see the older Betty. She needn't have worried, the few who'd seen her said, in amazement, that she looked the same, only with grey, instead of black, bangs. Hugh Hefner became friends with Page, even inviting her to Playboy Mansion parties, and helping her get back some of the monies owed from the proliferation of Page product. Eventually, Hef and Page were seen together in a candid photo from one of his legendary shindigs, and guessed what? She did, indeed, look remarkably like the Betty of nearly 50 years early, only with flattering silvery-grey bangs. One likes to think Page, unlike Monroe, went

on to have a nice life. As it happens, Betty was laid to rest nearly within arm's reach of Marilyn's grave.

From John's Blog: Friday, Dec.,19 2008:"Forrest J. Ackerman is Dead, and I Don't Feel So Good My Damned Self.." Of course, we knew it could happen any day. The man WAS 92, and in poor health, but, I'd been told that, in the past year or so, his condition was actually improving. I think he even made a personal appearance or two, not long ago. I wrote to him a few times and even thought about writing to him a few days ago. I was out of the country then. I wasn't even aware, yet, that our leader, our fearless leader, was gone. Forrest J. Ackerman, and publisher James Warren created the first Monster Fan magazine, *Famous Monsters of Filmland* in the late 50s, arguably making Ackerman the Father of Monster Fandom itself, and even what we now call Fanzines, or "zines," like the one you now hold in your hand. Several years ago Alex Wald, whom I admire very much, and I collaborated on a loving tribute to FM (As the magazine is frequently known) AND Redd Foxx, for the cover of Roctober # 28. FJA (one of his many sobriquets, along with The Ackermonster) is also credited with coining the term "Sci-Fi." Ackerman was not on a mission to make Horror films respectable, but he never resorted to poor taste. He may have shown a little too much enthusiasm, in some readers' eyes, for what were not exactly "A" films, but, he loved these movies just as we kids loved them. Now, FM was indeed aimed at a target audience of preteen males, there's no denying that, but, there were also excellent articles, photos, and the cover art was always top notch, most notably that of the great Basil Gogos, still alive, still active, and ■ sweetheart of a guy, as was Forry. Only adults who's sent their inner child packing could remain apart from an old friend such as this, for long. Parents who'd grown up with the magazine would go on to enjoy it with their kids. Other parents thought of *FM* as some sinister influence...one of my friends told me that his mom had forbidden him to watch horror films or read *Famous Monsters*. Later, when she realized these things were not going to cause brain damage, the ban was lifted. Decades later, when my friend was perusing an old back issue that he'd missed, he saw his own face! You see, in true "zine" community style, Forry encouraged readers to not only send in letters, but, also their photos, and even reviews and short stories. Amateur Horror Film makers were also given ■ forum in *FM*, most notably Chicago's own Donald Glut, who basically invented the genre, and was already ■ regular contributor to *Famous Monsters* by the time I happened upon the magazine. "Uncle Forry," as we all, to a man, boy, woman and girl (just like record collecting, this is only a "Boy's Club" if you choose to perpetuate the myth, sisters) knew him, was always there as an advocate to those who felt different, even persecuted, for enjoying Fantastic Films (as they're, more appropriately, called in parts of Europe). When I lived in Glenview, Illinois (a suburb, north of Chicago) in the early 70s, ALL the boys, and surely some of the girls, watched monster movies on *Creature Features* and *Screaming Yellow Theatre* ■■ weekends, and talked about it, Monday, at school. This was how we bonded. You weren't cool if you didn't like horror films. I moved to Kewanee, a small town in rural Illinois, and it was the same scene. We all watched the previously mentioned shows, and, briefly, one called *Freaky Films*, and (if you had cable...) *Acree's Creature Features*, based in The Quad Cities. In fact, that show featured the comic Edwardian vampire, Vincent Hedges, who was portrayed by Kewanee resident, the late Ken Gibson (whose obituary appears in my column in issue #44), another adult who understood. All was good, I was even President of The Monster Club in my neighborhood. Then I moved to Texas, and the roof fell in on me. It suddenly wasn't cool anymore to like Horror films. I caught a lot of shit about it, if you can imagine that. But the other kids, with their simple-minded opposition to my way of life, didn't bring me down in the long run, they only made me stronger. Uncle Forry, though we had yet to meet, set an example that I've carried with me for life, which is, don't let others dictate to you what you should do or what you should like. *FM* ran into opposition from parents and concerned citizens (some of whom were probably "Swinging," anyway), but they stood up for themselves and their fans with an excellent article called "There are Things More Horrible Than Horror Films." They also ruffled some feathers with a bold political move on Warren's part, encouraging parents to speak out against the Vietnam draft, lest their 10 year old sons reading *FM* be sent to Vietnam within the next 10 years. Fortunately, it didn't go that way, but, it created controversy at a time when younger kids were believed to not have a clue about Vietnam (I was a schoolkid at the time, and there was no way of NOT knowing about the war, then). Later, Warren performed the more Middle America-friendly task of opposing the Khomeni regime during the Iran hostage crisis, not in an effort to subdue the magazine's detractors, but, to show that *FM* loved this country as much, or more, than they did, and would not stand by and let it be defamed. By and large, though, *Famous Monsters* was not political, so much as fun. There were other, often excellent, mags aimed at teens and adults, like *The Monster Times* and *Castle of Frankenstein*, but, Forry found a niche and stuck with it, and, did we, eventually, grow up? Not on your life. Flash forward to the early 21st Century - I wasn't dressed like Jor-El, riding the skies in my rocket car, with my robot slave in tow, as my Sci-Fi addled brain had dreamt of, back in the 70s, but, I was realizing another dream from my childhood years, I was going to meet Forrest J. Ackerman. Forry was making an appearance at House of Monsters (a sadly now-defunct Monster memorabilia store in then-hipster ridden Wicker Park). When I ■■ him, I just had to tell it to him like it was - "Uncle Forry, I want to thank you for helping me get through ■ difficult childhood, which I'm still getting through, NOW!" Everybody called him "Uncle Forry," and everyone was transformed into ■ child, once more. Uncle Forry has now reclaimed his own youth, not as the vampire would, and once again his friends in life, Bela, Boris, Lon Chaney, Jr., Peter Lorre, Vincent Price, Peter Cushing (the list goes on and on) are surely with him again, paying homage to our leader, and, in a sense, theirs, too.

Notes: *Famous Monsters*' influence on Rock n' Roll is, not surprisingly, immense. Alice Cooper and Gene Simmons are both avowed fans. Roy Loney told me that the Flamin' Groovies' classic, "Teenage Head," was inspired, in part, by his love for *Famous Monsters*. The most visible influence of *FM* would have to have been on The Misfits, however. They appropriated the magazine's logo for their own, and later brought in cover artist Basil Gogos, to do their T-shirts and album covers, one of which was called....What else? "Famous Monsters." In 1981, I made one of my rare excursions to the legendary Dallas Punk dive, The Hot Klub (I was still underage at the time). There were flyers on the wall for upcoming gigs by The Misfits and Roky Erickson and The Explosives, both done collage style with photos and text from old *FM*s. I'm not one for taking down a flyer before a show has passed, but, in this case, I wish I had. Sammy Alert: FJA had ■ "Sammy moment," recounted in the pages of *FM*. Invited to a film award show, Forry was amazed to find that one of his favorite (non-Horror) entertainment heroes, Sammy Davis, Jr., was also at the event. While trying to think of something to say, by way of an introduction, Ackerman's concentration was blocked by Sammy himself, who told him what a big fan HE was of the magazine. Sammy worked with Christopher Lee around this time in the unsuccessful TV pilot, *Poor Devil*, and, at Sammy's insistence, Lee and his frequent costar, Peter Cushing, did cameos as Dracula and Dr. Frankenstein in the Sammy Davis, Jr./Peter Lawford vehicle, "One More Time."

I was just informed that **Sean Byrne** (Also known as John Byrne), lead singer and rhythm guitarist for The Count V, of "Psychotic Reaction" infamy, has passed away. Sean left his native Ireland, at the Age of 14, after his Mother died. A few years later, in San Jose, he joined ■ fledgling rock band that would become The Count V. The band members were just starting out in college. They hit on on the perfect combo of Stones raunch and Yardbirds Rave-Up to conceive "Psychotic Reaction," which quickly raced up the charts, and got the band on shows like *Where The Action Is* and *American Bandstand*, pretty heady stuff for five guys still in their late teens. Naturally, an album appeared next, and, unlike many Garage Band One-Hit wonders of the day, there wasn't really ■ duff track on the whole LP. Even the couple of numbers that maybe didn't stand up to the others as a whole were probably better than anything YOUR teenage band released. The band experimented with multitracking and backward guitars, and Byrne had a unique way with ■ song...to say the least. In fact, on a bill with The Doors and Them, Jim Morrison told Byrne that he was a very good singer. VAN Morrison, Sean's countryman, ■■■ probably too pissed to comment. Kenn Ellner, sometimes singer, harp player, and group spokesman, told Dick Clark on national television that the band, under his father's advice, had turned down one million dollar's worth of bookings in order to stay in college, calling the business "precarious," and seemingly unsure of their future popularity. He was, unfortunately, right on the money, ■■ a matter of speaking. Despite ■ hit single that set a million radios ablaze, a solid LP (albums weren't really the thing, in those days), and three singles that were as good, or better than, anything on the album, the band soon called it a day. The lack of a follow up meant the bookings weren't forthcoming, and the live shows weren't paying that well, anyway. The band called it quits, but seemingly on far more amicable terms than many of their peers. The "San Jose Sound" didn't really take off, as they stood in San Francisco's looming shadow, though there were many fine groups at the time, and The Syndicate of Sound, who'd scored big with another punk classic, "Little Girl," experienced similar hassles, but, managed to stay in the game a few years longer, albeit with several lineup changes. In later years, "The Big Three," The Count V, Syndicate of Sound, and The Chocolate Watchband, would reform, sometimes with a revolving door policy, and sometimes sharing bills together in the Bay Area. The Count V was probably the first, playing their first reunion show in 1987, which would later be made into ■ CD that's better than anyone had a right to expect. The group played sporadically, somehow missing out on the "Garage Festival" scene, then emerging in The U.S. and Europe. The *Chicago Tribune* even ran a short article a couple of years ago, saying that Byrne had put together a completely revamped version of the group, calling themselves "The Counts," infused with Latin influences ala Santana, and featuring ■ female vocalist (however, I've been told that the last shows The Count V gave were business as usual, though they were, by then, down to three original members). Maybe history really doesn't repeat itself for some, but, it will every time you play "Psychotic Reaction" on your car radio, or your stereo, loud and hard. That's what Sean would have wanted...DANT- DA-NA-DANT-DAAAAA!! DANT DAAA DA NA DA DUNT....DANT-DA-NA-DANT-DAAAAAAA-DAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!!!

My Dinner with Dante

Interview Conducted by Dan Kelly

San Franciscan writer Bob Calhoun has the worst-kept secret identity in the world. Better known as Count Dante, the Deadliest Man Alive—front man and bassist for the hard-rocking Black Dragon Fighting Society—Calhoun spent several years during the late 90s and early 2000s as wrestler, rocker, and motivational speaker in San Francisco's Incredibly Strange Wrestling (ISW) promotion. Calhoun's ISW memoir, *Beer, Blood, and Cornmeal: Seven Years of Strange Wrestling*, was recently published by ECW Press. A torrid collection of tales of bizarre wrestling matches between sasquatches, leather daddies, devil chickens, ad more, intermixed with booze, punk rock, and blizzards of tortilla shells, *Beer, Blood, and Cornmeal* also charts a forgotten period of SF music history alongside Calhoun's personal tribulations and the backlash of adopting the nom de guerre of Chicago martial artist/comic book ad celebrity, John "Count Juan Raphael Dante" Keehan, the original "Deadliest Man Alive."

Dan Kelly: All righty, let's go with the basic personal stats. A little background on Bob Calhoun, and what led you to the Black Dragon Fighting Society, ISW, and the writerly life.

Count Dante: Ooo, that's a span of years. For some crazy reason in the mid 90s I decided it was a good idea to start a band called Count Dante and the Black Dragon Fighting Society. At first we were just going to wear bowling shirts or whatever people were wearing in the mid 90s and play distorted rock, but then I got the idea to wear leopard print kimonos and deliver a success seminar on stage. All of this was riffing on those comic book ads. I didn't know much about the real Count/John Keehan yet. The web wasn't really a factor. It was something you heard about in 1995-6 but most people didn't have it in their houses or even at work yet. So, if you're a 300 pound guy running around in a leopard print kimono, delivering a success seminar, and there's a weird punk rock wrestling show based out of your town, sooner or later you're gonna end up in that wrestling show.

Were there a lot of similar bands at the time in San Francisco?

SF has always been an incubator for offbeat bands. I mean any big city is really, but SF especially. The problem with this is that you end up world famous in San Francisco. Stuff from here doesn't really make it out of here. It's both international and insular

How do you mean?

San Francisco is this international city, really; a city people know the world over, but at the same time, when you live here, people get really locked into their scenes and four blocks of their neighborhoods. A lot of very sophisticated scenester types in SF don't have a clue what's going on outside of whatever neighborhood they happen to have a flat in, let alone, let's say Oakland or San Jose.

Were you born there?

SF, yes, at UCSF. I'm a native. It's a cliché thing but my family did the white flight thing, it was a fad back then, and I grew up in the suburbs about 30 miles south of SF, where all I had were comic book spinner racks and UHF TV to keep me company.

When did you start pursuing music, and how did you land on playing the bass?

The same reason most people land on playing the bass, it seems easier. Also, I was a bigger guy so it just seemed a better fit than guitar. I like the strings to be farther apart.

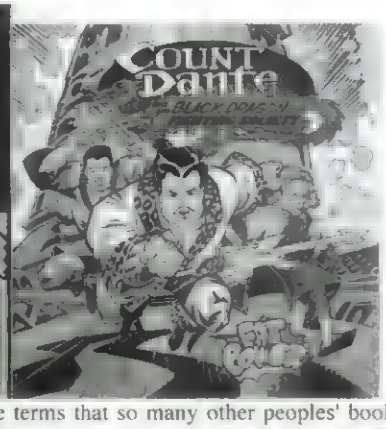
When did you start playing?

When I was 15 or so. Music, like the martial arts, is physically liberating. It's partly why I still do it. There's that physical side to the art, to the performance, there's the timing, the feeling that you've pulled something off when you've put on a real rockin' show. The adrenalin is there. You don't get that as much from filmmaking or acting. You get it from pro wrestling or rock, or sometimes from martial arts

What was your musical evolution (listening and playing)?

I was ruined for all time by my friend Zane's mom, Ruby. She was a waitress at the Mabuhay Gardens, a really crucial punk club in San Francisco's North Beach. V. Vale still lives around the corner from it. So, she kind of wrecked us for the 1990s by driving us to see The Dead Kennedys at the Mab or the Farm or other bands. I saw the Descendants, Polkacide. I saw the Butthole Surfers when they had naked dancing girls on the stage and showed "Red Asphalt" behind them. These shows let me know that I could combine all of my weird interests into a rock band. But even with that, I couldn't get away from classic rock. The music my older sister listened to. Zeppelin, AC/DC. all of that. Hardcore punk wrecked me for what came later (Nirvana, etc.) but didn't do it's job completely by wrecking me for what came previously

How do you define hardcore in SF? Which bands in particular? The ones you mentioned? In Chicago I think I have a different perspective.



Well I'm kind of going by the terms that so many other peoples' books have saddled us with. The hardcore era is the early 80s. I guess the DK were from the previous era but I wasn't seeing them in '78 when I was nine years old. I was seeing them in the early to mid 80s before they broke up.

I was going to say you looked good for your age.

Butthole Surfers aren't an HC band either but they are from that time period that hardcore is assigned to. Yeah I was 14 when I first saw the Dead Kennedys at this place called the farm in SF. But the funny thing, is those shows, like black flag, they came to Palo Alto (Stanford University area). These radical bands used to play what are now the most BMW-strewn suburbs.

Was the BDFS your very first band, or were there bands before it?

There was a band called the Weeds of Crime that was inspired by those late 80s DC Chaykin Shadow comics. Chaykin, and later Kyle Baker, did those.

Oh, I loved that series. More when Baker was in charge. I'll always wonder what happened when Robo-Shadow and Robo-Shiwan Khan faced off.

I asked Andy Helfer that at a con once. They have the pages done, but it got pulled due to some Conde Nast thing. Basically it was Rock'em Sock'em Robots on the moon, and the Shadow, in robot form with the shadow's head, decided to stay on the moon. [Weeds of Crime] played the city. Ironically, the guys from that band, my suburban crew, replaced the members of the BDFS. So, it kind of is my first band. I jammed with people in projects that never really got off the ground. like all musicians

So, a string of nameless bands, and then the BDFS when you moved to SF?

Yes, Weeds of Crime among them. None that ever did more than put out a cassette demo. Count Dante has a lot of baggage. I never really get asked to be in regular SF bands for some reason. I think I intimidate people.

How do you mean?

Not really, but you build a whole persona around yourself, or appropriate somebody else's, and that really takes you out of the jamming pool for some reason. People expect me to show up to a recording session in a judo gi or something and start choking people out. I stick with the same projects for far too long I think. Or, being this guy who has a habit of folding everything into one project, I just keep adding to it. "Oh Count Dante will wrestle now, but he'll still have the band." See I think that whole thing should make people think it's really rad, like way out there. The wrestling bandleader philosopher king. But it tends to confuse all but the most out there people. Somebody like Michael Lucas from the Phantom Surfers seems to get it, but that's because he does sort of the same thing. Just without the wrestling

So, what's the history on the BDFS?

We met in SF. I roped Andy Davis and Ed "The Zen Machine" Faine into playing with me. Ed I knew from SF State, and Andy was friends with this band called the Bar Feeders that I knew. I ended up renting the Bar Feeders' practice space while they were in Europe and starting the Count Dante thing. One day I informed the guys they had to wear gis on stage. I think they thought I was joking, but they did it.

Bully for them!

Then, because I was worried about getting my ass kicked, I started training in Brazilian jiu jitsu, and kind of lived the character too much by showing up to shows at Mission District punk clubs in my gi after working out. What a way to get chicks!

Not to label you with a genre, but what do you consider yourself to be? Hardcore?

We're 70s rock and punk rock, for lack of anything.

Any ballads?

I'm always trying to write a monster ballad. The General sings a song he wrote when he was 18 about Sgt. Rock. It seems to go over with younger dudes.

Can you quote a few lines? *Roctober*'s readership loves comics.

"We went overseas to Normandy, where fighting was a way of life,
Me and the rest of Easy, we were riding on the edge of a knife
We fought the Nazis on mountain tops, in forests or anywhere
Our hearts were as worn as combat boots, our eyes had the thousand yard stare"

That's goddamned beautiful

"Cause I'm Rock, SGT. Rock, Easy Co. And where my friends are dying I must go."

Wait! What happened to Ice Cream Soldier?

I'm not sure if Ice Cream Soldier or Bulldozer are mentioned specifically in the song.

Any other comic-themed BDFS songs?

We just wrote a song called "Shang Chi, Master of Kung Fu" It really should give a co-writing credit to Doug Moench, because we're just paraphrasing the comic thought bubbles, more or less. But the whole look of the last record, Fat Power, was 70s Marvel. Steve Leialoha did the cover! What more can you ask for? He also did a BDFS Hostess ad in the middle booklet. He called after the thing already went to print, and asked if we could give a special thanks to John Romita Sr. because the Hostess ad he based it on was drawn by John Sr. It was too late though so thanks, Johnny Ring-a-ding Romita. My CD packaging would not be as entertaining without you Our two records were recorded by Bart Thurber who was in this band Whipping Boy, who are included in the *Roctober* black punk section. Bart isn't black, but their singer Eugene Robinson is. Eugene is the author of Fight: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Ass-Kicking but Were Afraid You'd Get Your Ass Kicked for Asking.

How many other bands did ISW attract, and what was the breakdown of musicians to wrestlers to musician/wrestlers like yourself?

Good question. Cruiser was in a band called the Mutilators that played around. Barry, who played the Aztec Mummy and other characters was in a band called the Hellbillys. He was also in a Bay Area hardcore band called Christ on Parade. A lot of the guys worked in rock clubs. They were bouncers at small punk dives or even the Fillmore. Everybody was involved in the scene in some way who wrestled in ISW. I was the only one who made it so obvious being Count Dante all the time. The Cruiser didn't play in the Mutilators as The Cruiser. There was one show where he played like two sets and changed and wrestled two matches though. Jello Biafra was Chango Loco's manager for a while. Kevin Seconds of 7 Seconds was also a manager.

They were pretend managers, right?

Yeah. I mean they weren't dealing with the California State Athletic Commission

What about the Scientology boy band?

69 Degrees? One of them worked the door at some SF rock clubs.

Did they actually perform [during ISW sets]?

They had a song. A couple of songs. Bad Boy Corey learned his craft from when he was a born again teen so he took Chrisitan pop tunes and changed the lyrics to be about L. Ron Hubbard, replacing Jesus with L. Ron and Scientology. Bbut they would sing a song before they'd wrestle and we had piped in music for them. "When I say DIA, YOU SAY 'NETICS!" After a while even cynical punk audiences started singing along to those horrid tunes. It was infectious. Every so often on Warped it was funny to watch people [see] them performing their song, and the people at the show didn't realize it was part of the wrestling, so some people walked away thinking that that was an actual musical act on the Warped Tour

How often did you play versus wrestle or emcee?

We only played one ISW show. We were scheduled to play another one at the Fillmore, but fucking Rage Against the Machine booted ISW off the bill so they could rent it out for a video. Imagine that. I wrestled pretty consistently from 1997 to December 1999. I mostly emceed from 2000 to 2003, but I still wrestled here and there. It was a tight little set. We warmed up the crowd, and then I fought two women. It's in the top five of the best nights of my life

Okay, so you start out by playing out. So, how did you get roped into [wrestling in the] ISW?

This bartender Fast Mike (not Fat Mike of NOFX) kept on me to go into ISW. He kept giving me the promoter's phone number. The few people who had seen the band were also on me. It was a natural really even though I kind of avoided it at first. I showed up to my first ISW show in a red, white and blue karate gi and that was it. I was in. I didn't plan on doing this for nearly seven years. I thought I'd do one or two shows, get some better gigs for my band, and move on.

Had you wrestled before?

No, I hadn't done pro wrestling. Just jiu-jitsu but it's totally different. Professional wrestling is a cooperative sport, not a competitive one, at least not in the ring. It's a series of signals. I never really learned it. Hell, neither did most guys in ISW

Since I never witnessed an ISW match, I think it's fair for me to ask, how much of it was real?

We were all a bunch of musicians and bouncers and whatever from the SF music scene, thrown in a ring and had to make it up as we went along. it's amazing nobody got killed when you think about it. People were getting hurt all the time. On Warped some of the wrestlers were just one big bruise by the end of the tour, but I mean it's all a show, a work.

Looking at the pictures in the book, there seemed to be some pretty vast size and weight differences between the wrestlers.

You have a guy in a chicken suit fighting a guy in a pink tutu. these aren't exactly Olympic level competitors out there. Yeah, and an experience difference. There were some guys trained out of those wrestling schools and then there were the geeks.

Geeks?

The nerds. Guys like me and The Cruiser and the Devil Chicken who came up with crazy ideas and were willing to play characters like, well, Uncle NAMBLA. When wrestling works right, it's like a martial arts class, but there's always crazy dudes. we had this one wrestler who I think never got that concept. He was always breaking people's noses. Here's the thing about pro wrestling. You can do the silliest move on earth, some crazy chicken walk into a clothes line that wouldn't hurt a crippled grandmother and get a big audience reaction, and then you could hit somebody with a tight, compact blow that totally makes them lose teeth and the audience doesn't really see it and doesn't care at all. Some guys get obsessed with the violence though. Some guys start to become their character, [some guy] who wants to be Bruce Lee and Tyson mixed together, even though he's playing a chef that was pretty much there to fight a guy in a chicken suit. Wrestling allows you to walk that line between fantasy and reality. That gets really addictive. It happened to a few guys. They started to live their characters outside of the ring

Yeah. Reading about Chango Loco was disturbing.

Yeah, poor Chango. You know, he's gotten some character roles down there in Hollywood.

How was an ISW show usually set up, and what was on the program?

Okay, ISW had two sets of wrestling and three sets of bands. At first the bands were mostly psychobilly or retro bands, but then as the scene changed heading into 2000, it started to have more punk and later, happy punk. The wrestling was a mixed bag. there were imported luchadores who could work, and then there were people like me, El Homo Loco, The Cruiser, Macho Sasquatcho, Chango, the Poontangler, etc. The matches we did were social satire. I did a Christians to the lions match where I wore a burlap tunic, dragged a cross around, and fought a guy in a lion suit. There was the gentrification match where the devil chicken and the sasquatch fought a pair of construction workers who were

building yuppie lofts downtown. Gay weddings, the Mexican Viking, [and] on and on. Let's see... of the bands that played the show, there were the Supersuckers, NOFX, The Donnas, The Dwarves, The Dickies, The Queers, Fear, Me First and the Gimme Gimmes. We started in nightclubs in south of Market and ended up doing the Fillmore. And there were the tortillas. The promoter got the idea to give tortillas to the audience so they could throw them at the wrestlers. People naturally want to throw shit at wrestlers. It must have something to do with our evolutionary past. Audra, the ISW promoter, decided that tortillas hurt a lot less than glass bottles. That became the show's trademark. Corn tortillas whizzing through the air. We did one show at the Fillmore where the air was so thick with corn dust I felt like I was emceeing a show in a sandstorm.

Excellent aerodynamics! How did the luchas react to it all?

You know I don't know. They never complained, and if they did, I couldn't understand them. Some of the American wrestlers complained though

"Serious" wrestling fans complaining about violating the purity of the sport?

Oh, all the time. I go into that in the book. the whole "our fake wrestling is more real than your fake wrestling."

ISW seemed pretty gay friendly, not that that's surprising for SF.

Yeah that was always a bit weird when we went on tour. We had been booking El Homo Loco as our #1 Baby Face, our top good guy. And then we get out into the rest of America and they want to boo him. I mean all he wants to do is dry hump the ref people. That's all he wants. Leave him be. In Salt Lake City [during] the Warped tour, the crowd there kept chanting "YOU SUCK DICK! YOU SUCK DICK!" at The Cruiser, our leather daddy wrestler. He grabbed the mic and said, "DAMN RIGHT I DO!" and the whole audience just broke out laughing. They didn't know what to say after that. But we did a show in Portland in 1997 where The Cruiser got on the mic and said, "I'm gonna buttfuck each and every one of you." And these skater kids freaked out. That was our only show that ended in a riot

Were El Homo Loco and The Cruiser actually gay?

El Homo Loco was gay and Cruiser wasn't. EHL lived the life. Yeah, I mean when they tag teamed he had to go through with the celebratory tongue kissing. It's all about the method I guess

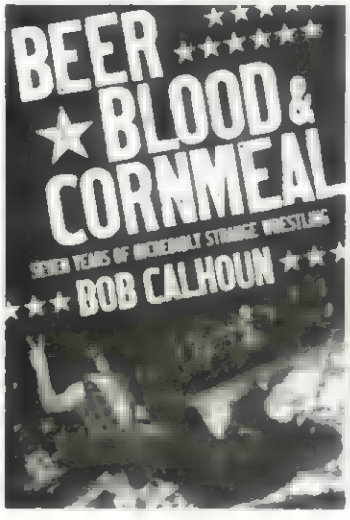
How many roles did you play? Was Count Dante a heel?

Dante was mostly a heel, yeah. Really only three [roles]. Dante the Baptist—the Dante that went Christian. And then Uncle NAMBLA, which I only did twice but that was more than enough. I really laid down all integrity for show biz there.

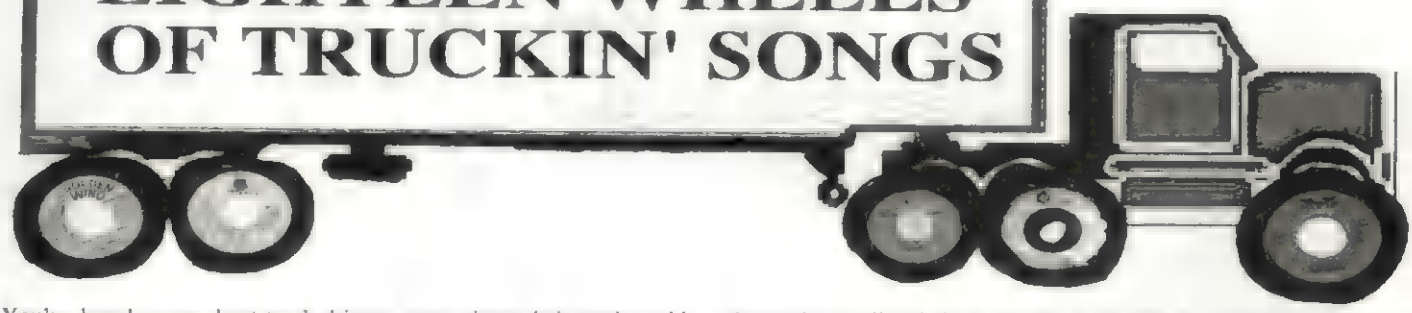
Who were your main foes?

Count Dante was always in palimony suit matches with the Poontangler. For whatever reason, I mostly ended up fighting women... The Poontangler always claimed that her kids were all mine. When she was eight months pregnant, we did this whole "Who's the Father of the Poontangler's Baby? [routine]. Pardon the expression, we milked it As the Christian, I mostly fought the lion, who was managed by Flamius Caesar—a gay Roman emperor played by the same guy who did El Homo Loco

Why so many women?
A lot of times, it was like I was the last kid picked for the team and had to play with the girls. But who cares? A. I got to wrestle women, and B. those were the matches people talked about. Especially with the Poontangler. I mean who could fight the Poontangler? She was like our Goldberg. She was unstoppable.
So, what's her story?
She was ■ fat chick porn queen. Did spreads in Plumpers and Big Butts. She was a go-go dancer at Stinky's Peep Show, home of the large and lovely go-go dancers. And she was the Poontangler. A natural performer. You know, my hardest matches were against her. She smacked me around pretty hard despite her feminine wiles. She really went crazy in there.
Did she name herself?
It was a name that evolved. For ■ while Audra the promoter wanted everyone to have some half-assed Spanglish name to be more lucha, even though we were all as white as Wonder bread. Either [she] ■ The Cruiser (who's her husband now actually) came up with that name, but they were hesitant. And I was like, no, go with the Poontangler. That's the name people will remember. Who cares about fake, poseur lucha? We're American, god damn it.
I know you go into it in your book, but what was it like living two lives?
It was always like putting my real life on hold. I was always waiting for another show at the Fillmore or another tour. That was more important than anything I was doing to earn a living. I probably paid ■ price for that. Also I'd be shelving books at a library I was working at and somebody would spot me and say, "Hey, didn't I see you fight two women while people were throwing tortillas at you?" That happened all the time. It's really hard to get ■ promotion when you're seen around town wrestling women.
How old were you when you started?
I was maybe too old to be starting the wrestling show, if I think about it, I was 27, 28. I already wasn't young, young. By the time the thing came crashing down with the euro tour in 03, we were all pushing 40 or well into our 30s at least. We couldn't keep doing this forever.
What was the median age of the wrestlers?
When? Like 2000? Probably 30, 31 by the show's height I'd say. There were some younger guys, but most of us had day jobs. Super Pulga was a school teacher. El Homo Loco worked at a biotech firm. El Pollo Diablo worked at a document delivery company. I was ■ sometime journalist, but mostly worked in medical libraries. The Cruiser was a web designer and animator. Like, we were professionals, or on the cusp of being professionals. It was almost ■ John Naisbitt Megatrends thing: high tech/high touch. The more our lives became technical, the more time we spent at computers in our working lives, the more we wanted to hit each other with steel chairs in that ring. The same was true for our audience. The more they got dot com jobs, and pushed pixels, the more they wanted to get drunk and throw tortillas at me and the Poontangler.
Were you all college graduates?
Yes, a lot of us were college grads. We were probably the only wrestling promo that would have people leave the show to go to grad school every so often. Those were the smart guys. They hadn't lost their grip
What's been the general reaction to the book? Have any of the old ISW wrestlers read it and offered their opinions?
The general reaction to the book has been positive. Allan Bolte, my co-announcer in ISW and a guy who announced wrestling in San Francisco for years, left me a very nice voice mail about it. But even then he said that I got it "85 percent right." Most of the former ISW wrestlers that I've discussed the book with always have some kind of caveat about it, but I guess that's natural. Most people, even those who tour with a weird, punked-out wrestling show, don't expect to have books written about them. I did get one four-page hateful screed from one of my former lucha colleagues, but the majority of wrestlers seem happy that the book exists and that it's all not just swept under the San Francisco rug. In this book I really tried to depict everyone as a human being, and to be self-deprecating. To really strive to see my failings, and to remember why these nutjobs were so important to me in the first place. I mean we were all friends at one time. If I paint ■ picture that they were all incompetent or dumb, then I really look like an idiot for hanging out with them. Some of these people, even ones I don't speak to anymore and don't want to speak to ever again, were there for me, or pulled off incredible things on ■ shoestring budget. That show never got on Comedy Central or MTV or whatever the measuring stick is for success in today's media world, but we did get farther than we ever should have
So, is Count Dante retired, or just in hibernation?
As ■ wrestler, I was done in 2003. I still play with the band. We opened for the Dickies in January, and we just played the Great American Music Hall (a pretty rad old venue in the city—Duke Ellington played there once). So it's still going. I mean the band has been the best vehicle for promoting the book. It gets me press where I don't think I would otherwise get it. Maximumrocknroll reviewed BBAC! The whole SF music history in there is really appreciated. So yeah, I still put on the tiger stripe kimono and do the old kung fu rock and roll success seminar.
Ever thought of testing the corporate waters with your success seminar?
I think America, even the world, needs the Count Dante Kung-Fu Rock and Roll Success Seminar now more than ever. By utilizing the deadly fighting secrets of the Orient and then combining them with the societally liberating force of rock and roll we can get the Dow moving upwards again, but without the growing gap between rich and poor that we've experienced for the last eight years. Using ballistic street fighting maneuvers to amass amazing wealth and real estate has a way of leveling the playing field. I would match a Count Dante warrior for success up against any ten Goldman Sachs traders any day of the week.
You recently visited Chicago and the grave of the original Count Dante, John Keehan. Any thoughts or feelings you'd like to share about the experience?
It did give me pause there for a second. I mean I was standing on the man's unmarked grave. I've appropriated his identity. If there was ever going to be ■ EC Comics "Tales from the Crypt," moment it was going to be then. There's a certain enormity of the moment there. I thanked him and left an offering. I would like to help him get a grave marker some day, preferably one with that promo pic from the introduction page of "World's Deadliest Fighting Secrets" on it. He's the Count. His presence really should be announced to the world.
What's next for Bob "Count Dante" Calhoun and the BDFS?
I'm thinking of putting out another Count Dante record. It'll have "Sgt. Rock" on it as well as "Shang Chi Master of Kung Fu." There's also a song called "Hephaestus" which has ■ chorus that goes "Hephaestus, Hephaestus, the blue collar god/the deity stuck in a dead end job." I want to do this one on vinyl to justify its physical existence in our increasingly digital age. You know how the AC/DC record is exclusively available at Wal-Mart? I'll make a big fuss how the new Dante record is exclusively available in my garage, but that'll really just mean that I couldn't get distribution for it! PS: The previous Dante records are "exclusively" available through CDBaby.



EIGHTEEN WHEELS OF TRUCKIN' SONGS



You've heard songs about truck drivers, many times their stories told. And depending on your definition of ■ truck, these stories go back ■ ways; if the Trojan Horse isn't a big rig hauling freight, what is? But if the birthday is the invention of the motorized truck, head to Germany in 1896. Assuming that such vehicles were too new to use as sexual metaphors, let's say that the minstrel tune that became popular that year "You've Been A Good Old Wagon But You Done Broke Down," was about a non-motorized wagon, but songsmiths soon caught up, and the truck made its way into popular music. In 1906 the Broadway show "About Town" featured "Seeing the Town in A Yap Wagon," about the truck-bus vehicles tricked out to drive sightseers around New York; by the 1930s country music had its first trucking classic with Cliff Bruner and his Texas Wanderer's "Truck Driver's Blues;" soon after Memphis Minnie recalled that she "caught me a truck" in her girlish days; and by the 50s ■■ anthem of rock 'n' roll's infancy noted that "around the corner an ice wagon flew" (though Bo Diddley may have been using slang for a hearse). And of course, one has to assume that when Scott Joplin laid the foundation for American pop around the turn of century he knew that several generations later "The Entertainer" would be the holy hymn of ice cream trucks everywhere. In the early 20th Century bands performed on trucks and mobile recording trucks documented the magnificent music, and of course, some of the greatest icons in music history were no strangers to driver's seat (Elvis drove a truck for Crown Electric and James Brown prided himself on driving his own tour bus).

But in this issue's exploration of truck driving music we ■■ visiting a very specific era, in which one of the most topically specific subgenres of country music crashed the charts. The genres first true masterpiece was penned in 1954 (as a b-side), proving itself not only artistically triumphant but Nostradamus-like. Terry Fell's "Truck Driving Man" told the tale of ■ truckdriver, a truckstop, and most interestingly, a then non-existent culture of trucker music, made for truckers to listen to in truckstops. There were great trucking songs before and after Fell's, but there was certainly no convoy of trucking songs crashing through the public's consciousness (or the trucking community's consciousness). But less than ■ decade later that would change when the first King of Trucker Music, Dave Dudley released "Six Days on the Road" in 1963. Combining trucker jargon, the romanticism of the road, a sense of hard labor, the cowboy spirit, American manliness, and a driving rhythm suggesting chugging down the highway, it was the perfect trucker song. It hit #1, and it opened the doors for truck driving hits by the likes of Red Sovine (whose melodramatic spoken story songs included 1967's ghostly "Phantom 309"), Del Reeves, Dick Curless, and even George Hamilton IV, who finally made Fell's classic song a smash.

The hits petered out by '69, and the punctuation mark was emphatically rendered in '71 when Red Simpson (the most dedicated, tireless truck troubadour, making low charting anthems well before Dudley's breakthrough and long after this triumph) released the #4 hit "I'm A Truck," a postmodern last word, spoken from the perspective of the vehicle. But don't unhaul that load yet, kids, there's more!

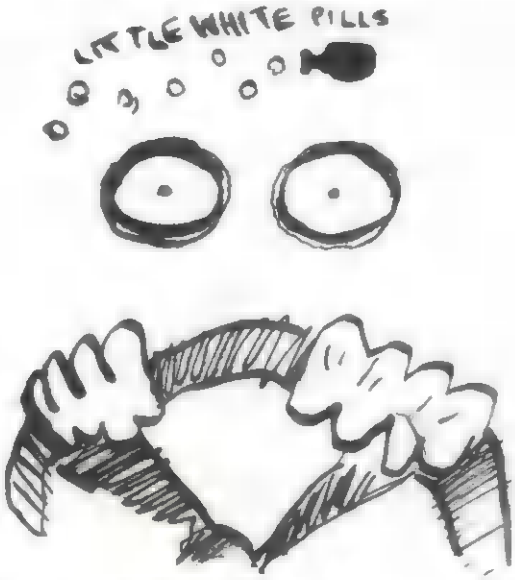
Long before Dudley started singing about logbooks the FCC began regulating a short distance radio wave broadcast service for personal use known as Citizens Band radio. Though CBs became officially government sanctioned in 1945, it wasn't until technology made electronics small and cheap enough in the '60s that truckers began to use them regularly. In the '70s when the new 55mph speed limit made detection of highway patrolmen (or "Smokeys" in trucker CB lingo) so important for speeders, and the gas crisis made the location of cheap fuel valuable info, one of the great fads of the 20th century was born. The combination of the cowboy/outlaw trucker persona, the irresistible lingo and codes ("10-4 good buddy" is much more fun to say than "alright"), and the fantasy lure of code names ("handles") and anonymity made CB radio the chatrooms/texting of its day. That is, if everyone texting their friends was pretending to be a burly truckdriver. This CB radio craze created a pop culture explosion with TV shows like *BJ and the Bear* (about a trucker and his chimpanzee) and Claude Akins' *Movin' On* and movies like Chuck Norris' truck-struction classic "Breaker! Breaker!" and Burt Reynolds' "Smokey and the Bandit" series.

But the greatest cultural impact was on the country music charts, where the dormant (save for a few heroic resuscitation attempts by Simpson) trucker sub-genre was reborn with New Testament-like glory from 1974 until the end of the decade with charting records like Cledus Maggard's 1976 #1 "The White Knight" (which, like many of the songs of this era, was about noble truckers turned outlaw because of evil highway cops), "East Bound and Down" by Jerry Reed, and the monster truck of the era, "Convoy" by C.W. McCall, which topped the pop and country charts with its insane tale of truckers crashing through tollgates, leading scores of cop cars on a cross country chase. Like many of its contemporaries "Convoy" feels more like ■ novelty song than the best tunes of the 60's truck song era, but it did provide a nice platform for the original stars to make comebacks, which Red Sovine did with a flourish by releasing "Teddy Bear" a C&W #1 and top 40 pop hit about a crippled child with a CB radio and the heroic truckers who lift his spirit. That song established Sovine as the genre's co-King, and he never lived to see an era when such music no longer reigned, as he died in April 1980, poetically, behind the wheel. Later that year the 2nd wave came to a official end, fittingly, with the last possible words on the subject being sung by the man who kicked off the party in '63. As "Rolaids, Doan Pills, and Preparation H" got to the bottom of truck drivers' real life dramas, the last run was completed, and a great era ended.

Since those classic days went the way of 99 cent diesel there have been many notable trucking and CB songs, including ■ trucking parody by Weird Al (1999's "Truck Driving Song"), raps by GZA ("Breaker, Breaker") and CB-enthusiast Sir Mix-A-Lot ("Bump It Down"), and even an entire trucker music-themed label Diesel Only that released jukebox truck song singles in the 90s, eventually releasing compilation CDs, including a great Red Simpson retrospective. But with one exception (Kathy Mattea's sublime 1988 "18 Wheels and a Dozen Roses") the glory days of trucking tunes have long ago rode into the sunset. But on these following pages *Roctober's* esteemed panel of contributors looks back and honor these great tunes, pontificating on 18 of their faves, reflecting on dozens more, and hopefully giving a well-rounded look at the wheels that kept America rolling for most of the 60s and 70s. Obviously many of our writers value absurdity over "quality," so don't quibble over rankings. Rather, sit back in your bucket seat, and roll on! *(Note: all chart positions listed I this article are Billboard Country & Western unless otherwise noted)*

Wheel #1 "Six Days on the Road" by Dave Dudley (#1, 1963)
by Gentleman John Battles and Jake Austen
Illustrations by Johnny Sampson and Robert Dayton

Dudley is, in death as in life, The King of the Truckdriving Songs. His booming voice and the big, boss guitar sound of his better known songs (provided by Johnny Voit) defined the truckstop sound, which was just coming into being when he cut his breakthrough smash, 1963's "Six Days on The Road." The song is the perfect trucker tune; his manly monotone invokes the macho of the road cowboys, yet he's not too manly to avoid expressing his (universal theme of) longing for home ("my hometown's coming in sight/If you think I'm happy *you're right*!"), plus there's enough trucker lingo to sound authentic, but not so much as to baffle Beetle drivers ("I just passed a Jimmy and a White...I'm a little overweight and my logbooks way behind"). Not to mention some of the only pro-drug lyrics aimed at Republicans in the 60s ("I'm taking little white pills and my eyes are open wide). "From there, it was on to big rig classics like "Truck Driving Son Of a Gun" (#3, 1965), "There Ain't No Easy Run" (#10, 1969), and "Thanks For All The Miles," speaking a language the truckers understood (long before the C.B. craze of the mid-70s and its subsequent novelty hits). Not that Dudley was above doing novelties, check out the almost-Rockabilly "Cowboy Boots" (#3, 1963) or the hilarious "Rolaids, Doan's Pills, and Preparation H" (which tells you what truck drivers REALLY live on). Dudley had a big, full sound, the kind that, along with Johnny Cash or George Jones, could win over the average rocker who's just getting his feet wet in the Country pool. He sang in two keys, matter of fact and that's that. Dudley's career didn't begin or end in the truckdriving song era that he helped launch. He was a rockabilly artist for King in the 50s and just two years before his death he released a truck driving reaction to the September 11th attacks called "You Ain't Gonna Truck with Us" on his album "American Trucker." Though he was far from a one trick pony (his half-century career yielded well over thirty LPs, most of non-big rig c&w), between 1963 and 2001 he recorded at least 75 songs about trucks, one for every year he lived. When he rode off into the sunset in 2003 naturally, I expected to hear tales of truckers hanging their little flags at half-mast after Dudley made his last run, but, when I asked my friend, Pope, who's a trucker himself, he just said, "Nahh, these younger guys don't know anything about that." But, we remember Dave Dudley, the real patron saint of truck drivers everywhere.



Spare Tire: "Rolaids, Doan's Pills and Preparation H" *by Dave Dudley (#77, 1980) – Not only was this arguably the most honest trucker song ever recorded, it also can be viewed as the last recording of the truck song era, charting in 1980. I suppose it also heralded the product placements that would plague pop culture in the greed-driven eighties. (Jake Austen)*

Wheel #2 "Teddy Bear" by Red Sovine (#40 pop; #1 c&w, 1976)
RED SOVINE MYSTERY: SOLVED! By Mike White

Woodrow Wilson "Red" Sovine was born July 17, 1918. This native of Charleston, WV was a regular on the Grand Ole Opry and became known as "The King of Trucker Music." As the old commercial for "Red Sovine's Greatest Hits" used to say, "Red Sovine means as much to trucking as CBs and hot coffee."
Unlike other Trucker singers such as Dave Dudley or the similarly-hued Red Simpson, Sovine was known more as a storyteller than a crooner. While Sovine could belt out gear-

jamming tunes like "Six Days on the Road" or "Woman Behind the Man Behind the Wheel" (#92, 1977) with the best of them, he is best remembered for maudlin epic poems like "Little Rosa" (#5, 1956) or "Phantom 309" (#9, 1967). The most famous Sovine song is his experiment in rhyme couplets, "Teddy Bear." Here the tale of a wheelchair-bound boy and the loss of his father are related in tear-jerking detail.

The most perplexing song in Sovine's oeuvre, "Little Joe" (#45, 1976), has the song's narrator experiencing his own 18-wheel hardship before being saved by a puppy (the title character) and being reunited with a miraculously walking Teddy Bear. The reason for Teddy Bear's ambulatory nature doesn't exist in Sovine's song catalog. This unexpected turn requires looking at the life of Teddy Bear outside of the songs.

Written by Sovine, Tommy Hill, Dale Royal, and Billy Joe Burnette, "Teddy Bear" is said to have sold over a million copies in six weeks, climbing the country charts to the top slot faster than any other song to date in 1976. The song also crossed over to reach number 40 on the pop chart. With such popularity, record executives demanded another "Teddy Bear" tale to cash in on the phenomenal success. Yet Sovine was uninterested in narrating "the continuing adventures of Teddy Bear."

A decade earlier, when Sovine claimed the Trucker Song throne with his song "Giddy-up-go" (#82 pop; #1 c&w, 1965) he and co-writer Tommy Hill penned an answer song to this hit for country legend Minnie Pearl. Simply called "Giddy-up-go Answer" (#10, 1966), this song tells nearly the same story as Sovine's tale of a young trucker reuniting with his father, but this time, from the mother's point of view. Rather than an answer song to "Teddy Bear," singer Diana Williams recorded the morbid Dale Royal and Billy Joe Burnette-penned lament, "Teddy Bear's Last Ride," which killed off the handicapped tyke.

Told from the point of view of the best friend of "Momma Teddy Bear," the song portrays Teddy Bear's slow, sad, downward spiral. Dying of unknown causes, "He talked less often on the old CB/And there were times when he'd hardly talk with me." Eventually, "They never did catch Teddy Bear again/'Cause late one night the Angel came./And the last thing he said before he died/Was, 'Tell all my trucker friends how I enjoyed the rides.'" Apparently, Sovine was incensed. His beloved Teddy Bear was needlessly slaughtered. Moreover, Williams's single was climbing the charts. Rather than commenting on the "Last Ride," Sovine (via songwriter Moe Lytle) came back with "Little Joe." Here we learned that not only was Teddy Bear alive but he could walk. Essentially, the disrespect of Diana Williams was "the miracle that made Teddy Bear walk again."

Little Joe would not have been able to save Sovine from the wreck of April 4, 1980, when the singer had a heart attack behind the wheel of his vehicle and crashed. He died due to the injuries sustained, but left behind an undying musical legacy.

TEDDY BEAR'S LAST RIDE

By Dale Royal & Billy Joe Burnette

I was there that day and saw her cry
When Mama Teddy Bear said, "Ten-four and goodbye."
She turned off the old CB and just looked at me,
And her heart overflowed and her tears ran free.

And the gratitude in her face shone like the sun
For all the things those big tough truckers had done.
A handful of change and a few dollar bills,
But most of all, a little crippled boy's dream fulfilled.

I guess I was Mama Teddy Bear's best friend.
I lived next door to her and little Teddy Bear since I don't know when.
And that's why now, before my memory grows old,
The rest of this story just has to be told.

I'd come over and sit with Teddy Bear while his mama was away
And play little games to help him pass the day.
In the afternoon he'd wheel that chair
Over by the radio and he'd go on the air.

And one by one he'd break 'em all.
I never knew a trucker not to answer his call.
He'd just grin and asked me not to tell his mom,
But I was pretty sure she knew what was going on.

But time has a way of taking its toll,
And much too fast, Mama Teddy Bear was growing old.
I watched as the silver touched her hair,
And her one aim in life was Teddy Bear.

And then I saw another change take place,
Little Teddy Bear was slowly losing the race.
I knew it, and his mama knew it too,
And there was nothing in this whole world either one of us could do.

He talked less often on the old CB,
And there were times when he'd hardly talk with me.
He took to sitting in the window and watching the road
And the big eighteen- wheelers rolling by with their loads.

Finally he was too weak to get out of bed,
And one day he looked at me and said,
"Would you turn on the radio and go on the air,
And tell all my trucker friends what's happened to Teddy Bear."

Well, the hardest thing I've done in my time
Was to pick up the mike and say, "Break one-nine...
"This is for all you truckers who care.
"I'm calling for your little friend Teddy Bear.

"He says to tell you he misses you all,
"And he's awful sorry he can't answer your calls."
They all came back and joked with me,
And said they'd catch him later on the old CB.

They never did catch Teddy Bear again,
'Cause late one night the Angel came.
And the last thing he said before he died
Was, "Tell all my trucker friends how I enjoyed the rides."

Mama Teddy Bear couldn't tell 'em, and neither could I,
'Cause each time we'd look at that radio, we'd both start to cry.
The funeral was preached at the chapel, and
Little Teddy Bear started on his last ride.

As the procession rounded the little city square,
The sounds of a hundred engines filled the air.
The truckers had dropped their trailers back somewhere behind,
And one by one they fell in line.

They all tried to comfort Mama Teddy Bear,
And it seemed like the warmth of God just filled the air.
Slowly they formed a circle 'round the little grave, and a lot of big men cried
That day as they paid their last respects on Teddy Bear's last ride.

LITTLE JOE

By Moe Lytle

Some time ago I was sippin' on some coffee and havin' some ham and biscuits when a motion caught my eye through the truck stop window. It was a little lost puppy; half-starved and shakin' from fear. Well, I just had to make friends with him so I picked him up and put him in the cab. And, buddy, he took to that truck like he was born there. Well, I named him Little Joe and as I watched him sleep on the seat beside me that's when I knew that Little Joe would be with me for a long, long time.

lived, of all things, was a radio station that played country music. Of course, I had cut my teeth on Hank Williams Sr. I think I could sing every song that he put out. One morning, Hank Williams Sr. and Johnny Horton were being interviewed at this radio station right down the street from our house. My mom took me down there to meet them. I was a big Johnny Horton fan too. They were going to go fishing out on the Bay out there, they're both big fisherman. Anyway, I told Hank Williams Sr. that I loved his songs, I could sing every song that he put out. He said, "Well I'll tell you what, don't try to sing like me or anybody else. Just be yourself and sooner or later it may pay off for you." That was quite a long while ago, but boy what a thrill to meet him! A year or so later he passed away.

As you became a teen, did you absorb other kinds of music?

When I got into junior high Ray Charles was one of my heroes. Not to mention Little Richard and all those guys, so that's where my rock foundation came from. Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis, and especially Ray Charles.

There's a strong natural blues element in your voice. Is that something most singers from Louisiana are born with?

I don't really know. I think it's just that a lot of folks from Louisiana have this little touch in their voice, what I call a soulful touch, that makes the person listening to what your singing believe what your saying. There are just several folks from down there who have that. I also listened to WNOE when we moved back to Springhill, Louisiana during my high school years. Man, I heard people like Art Neville, Clarence "Frogman" Henry, all the New Orleans sound. All of that was rhythm-and-blues and soulful music. I guess part of my sound came from listening to that music.

When you heard this wonderful mix of roots music, did you make distinctions in your own mind such as, "Oh, this is pop," or "this is country," or "this is a blues record"?

No, whatever sounded good to my ear - I didn't care if it was pop, country, jazz, whatever. If it's a great song, it really doesn't matter as long as you love the music. This new girl, Norah Jones, what a great song that is she has out right now. She's the one who won most of the Grammys this year and she's really kind of a pop and jazz singer, but she put a country song on her album. As a matter of fact I think it's a Hank Williams song. So, it's like when Rockin' Sydney put out "Don't Mess With My Toot Toot," what was that? It was just good. It felt good. So that's the way I've always been. It's like when Eddy Arnold had out "You Don't Know Me," what a great song. Now, was it country or was it pop? Was Ray Price country or pop with "For The Good Times?" It didn't matter! It was just a great song. Sammi Smith, "Help Me Make It Through The Night," what is it? You don't know and you don't care because it sounds so good to your ears.

What were some of the first bands you were in during high school?

When I was in the 10th grade, a little band came down from Magnolia, Arkansas and played our rec center down in Springhill. Some of the kids said, "Hey, you ought to get Joe up to sing a song or two with you." The name of the band at that time was the Cut-Ups. So they said, "Man, would you like to join up with [redacted] and be our front man?" I said, "Yeah, I'd love it!" Later on, we changed our name from the Cut-Ups to The Uniques. We went on and got a recording deal in Shreveport, Louisiana with Paula Records. We had some success with that group, you know.

THE UNIQUES

Did you record for any other labels before you went to Paula records?

Yes I did. I had a little record out on Chess Records. Leonard Chess had the Chess, Checker, and Argo labels. Dale Hawkins was on that label along with another guy named Lucky Clark who had a record that went, "Made me sick, oh so sick, I'll have to get a little better to die." He was from out of Shreveport, Louisiana. So I had a one-shot deal with Chess and it just didn't happen. Before that record though, when I was 15 years old, Merle Kilgore had been a disc jockey there in Springhill - he would work at the radio station during the week, and on the weekends he would do the *Louisiana Hayride*. He was known as the "Boogie King" of the *Louisiana Hayride*. So I would go down, and I would play Merle some songs on a piano they had at the radio station. He'd listen to them and he'd say, "Look, you've

got a couple of things here that I really like. I've got a friend in Hollywood, California. He's got ■ label called Imperial Records." I said, "Imperial Records! That's got Ricky Nelson and Fats Domino on it!" He somehow or other got me a deal with Imperial Records while I was still ■ sophomore in High School. They cut four sides on me - Ernie Freeman produced 'em, but the song just didn't happen. One side was called "Glenda" and the other was called "We're Through." I wrote them with a high school buddy of mine, Ronnie Campbell. They just didn't happen and so I stumbled around there for a few years. We had the band going *[The Uniques]* and we were working a lot of dates in the Ark-La-Tex area. So, I went to Stan's Record Shop over in Shreveport and I told Mr. Stan Lewis, "Hey, we've got ■ band and we're hot right now and I'm writing a lot of songs." He said, "Well, I'll be honest with you, my label is a rhythm and blues label and you're kind of pop. Look, go talk to Dale Hawkins he's my A&R guy for the labels I have here." Which were Jewel and Ronn Records, which were rhythm and blues. So, I walked up to Dale Hawkins and I said, "I'm Joe Stampley, I'm from Springhill, Louisiana, I write songs and I sing." He said, "OK, sing me something you just wrote." That's when I cracked down on a song that me and Merle Kilgore had written a few years back called, "Not Too Long Ago." I got about halfway through with the song and Hawkins said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. Get your band together and meet me in Tyler, Texas at Robin Hood Brian's Studios next Thursday. I'll record that song on you and one more." I thought, "My gosh, what a lucky deal this is." Sure enough, we got it together, pulled our little trailer out there, went to the studio and we cut the first recording for the pop label they formed, Paula Records. I remember well it was Paula record 219. They had this woman's cameo head ■■ the logo, that was Stan Lewis' wife, her name was Paula.

I had always wondered about that.

Well, that's how they came up with Paula Records. *(laughs)* A quick little bit of trivia here. My band, The Uniques, backed Nat Stuckey on his first country hit, "(Has Anybody Here Seen My) Sweet Thang"*(#4 c&w, 1966)*. We happened to be recording out in Tyler, Texas, we got through with our session and here comes Frank Page, who was Nat Stuckey's manager at the time - he was also running KWKH . He said, "We have to hire some musicians for this session, would y'all like to record three or four songs with Nat?" We said, "Shoot yeah, we're here, we're set up - we'll do it!" If you listen closely, very faintly in the background, you'll hear some fiddle sounding things - that's my Combo-Compact organ that I played back in the 60s. But we were thrilled to death and Nat had a big country record on "Sweet Thang." Nat and I became friends and he was also on Paula Records. But the big record on that label was "Judy In Disguise With Glasses," by John Fred & The Playboy Band. Number one in 36 countries! By contrast, the Uniques had a little success there with Paula Records. We had four or five Top-40 hits during that period. "Not Too Long Ago," was one of them, "All These Things," which was a ballad the way we did it, "How Lucky Can One Man Be" *(#11, 1974)*, and I think "You Ain't Tuff" charted for us. We thought we were somebody. *(Chuckles)*

One of the records I most enjoy by Joe Stampley & The Uniques is "Please Come Home For Christmas."

Thanks. Our version of "Please Come Home For Christmas" will stand up with any version of that record. What's funny is, I heard it for the first time on WNOE in New Orleans, Louisiana by Charles Brown, who wrote the song. Great singer! I said, "Boys, we're going to work that song up and we're going to record it." I think it was 1967 when we put that one out.

When I listen to the Uniques compilation that's out right now, I can hear your voice transform from that of ■ teenager's into a first-rate soul singer's.

It's amazing man, a lot of our stuff was just raw - I'll be honest with you, it was just raw. I played the piano and Combo-Compact organ, my brother Bobby played the bass and sang harmony, Ray Mills played guitar, and at first Bobby Sims played rhythm guitar, then Jim Woodfield joined up with us about two years after we broke as The Uniques, and Mike Love from Magnolia, Arkansas played drums. We were together from 1960 to about 1970 as The Uniques, and we had a good run as a rock'n'roll band.

Tell me a bit about "You Ain't Tuff," which I think is a great garage rocker.

That was a song written by Larry Puckett and Knox Henderson out of Tyler, Texas. We got ■ lot of songs from people out there because we recorded at Robin Hood Brian's there. As soon as I heard that song I said, "My gosh, I can't believe that the Rolling Stones haven't cut this song!" It was just one of those songs that was *raw* and it was just magic when we cut that song. That one is on *Joe Stampley & the Uniques' Golden Hits*.

Are there more Uniques tracks waiting for re-release?

There is a lot of stuff in the can, but I don't know if they'll ever put it out or not. Paula Records sold all of its stuff to Universal, and I don't know what they're ever going to do with it. But there's some stuff that's really good and raw - the reason it's so raw is because we were in on the beginning of what I call the rock'n'roll era. It really started with Elvis, Little Richard, Larry Williams and people like that, but we were listening to that. So, here we come along, ■ bunch of young guys, we really didn't know what we were doing, but we made some decent music. I'll tell you one of my favorite cuts on the *Golden Hits* CD, the old William Bell song "You Don't Miss Your Water Till Your Well Runs Dry."

What types of places were The Uniques playing during their hey-day?

Well, we did *American Bandstand*, *The Lloyd Thaxton Show*, we did The Soupy Sales Easter Show in New York City. That was at the Paramount Theater and at that sow was some of the early British rockers - the Kinks, the Hullabaloos, the Hollies, and even Little Richard was there. But we mainly made our money at colleges like Louisiana Tech, LSU, Northwestern State College in Louisiana, fraternities, sororities, high school proms, and nightclubs. We played a lot of teeny-bopper places, back in the mid-60s there were several towns that had Teen Centers and we were hot on the Teen Center market.

When the music started to change from something that you danced to into something that you sat and listened to while you looked at posters under ■ black light, did that spell the end for the Uniques?

That was the end for us because I just did not understand psychedelic music. It's kind of like how I don't understand rap right now. Of course the kids love it and it's ■ billion dollar a year business.

A lot of people think rap is something that sprang up during the last 20 years, but there were people who spoke rhythmically to music during the 40s and 50s.

Hey, you know who I think the first actual rapper was? When, I do these words, if he was talking them instead of singing them, you'd know right away. "Running to and fro, hard-workin' at the mill, never fails in the mail, here comes a rotten bill - Too Much

Monkey Business." or "Workin' at the service station, too many tasks, check the windows, check the tires, check the oil - dollar gas!" Chuck Berry was a rapper and he didn't know it! In "Nadine," he had ■ line where he said, "I was campaign shoutin' like ■ Southern diplomat - Nadine, honey is that you?" Well, that could be rap today. I try not to be judgmental at all about that stuff, for today's kids it's something different - when I was growing up it was rock'n'roll. I loved it, but everything changes, and there's no way to stop that. I'll be honest with you, I'm lost and stuck in the 50s and 60s and it's hard for me to get out. In my collection of CDs I've got Sam Cooke's Greatest Hits, Jerry Butler and The Impressions "For Your Precious Love," and stuff like that - that's the music I grew up on, and that's the music I still love.

Did a particular event cause The Uniques to go their separate ways?

No, you hit the nail on the head a while ago. When the music changed, when it started going psychedelic and metallic, it wasn't danceable type music and we were a dance band. So, when that started happening some of the guys started making other plans. Mike Love the drummer said, "You know, I want to start ■ boat business and sell boats and motors - I love that." My brother wanted to do something different, Ray Mills had ■ painting business. So, it wasn't like we were mad at each other or that type of deal - they wanted to go their own individual ways. During the 60s, Merle Kilgore had introduced me to Al Gallico, ■ publisher from New York City. I had written some country songs and I presented them to Merle and he said, "Shoot, I think that Al would sign you as ■ writer." When our deal ran out with Paula Records, Al Gallico had put The Uniques on Paramount Records to see what would happen, and he had put me on ABC-Dot as ■ country singer. My third or fourth single was "If You Touch Me You've Got To Love Me," and it went Top Ten *(#9, 1972)*. That's how it all happened.

Was there any resistance inside the industry towards ■ blue-eyed soul singer coming into the country field?

Oh yeah, here I was with the long hair and the whole bit. But I'll never forget my first show after "If You Touch Me You've Got To Love Me," became a hit. They put ■■ on a package with Lefty Frizzell, Carl Smith, and Don Gibson. I was the new baby boy on the block and I was scared to death. I never will forget Carl Smith telling me, "Man, you ought to get yourself some fringy jackets with the leather hanging down - you like to move on stage, so just be yourself and do your thing and just sing 'em out there." At the time of the first country record I did, ■ lot of people compared my voice to Conway Twitty's, "If You Touch Me" had the stop in it and everything. As a matter of fact, later on Conway & Loretta cut that song.

Did any of the country crowd tell you that you weren't going to make it because you came from the rock and soul fields?

No, not really, because a lot of these people didn't even know where I came from in the first place. They just enjoyed the music I was doing. I was the first male country act Norro Wilson produced, and so we kind of worked it up together. There I was fresh into it and Norro was a fresh producer, and he kind of liked the soulfulness of my voice, so he wrote a lot of songs that were especially made for me.

Of course you're ■ fine songsmith in your own right, does that help you pick songs that better suit a specific aspect of your style?

I think so. I've got songs in my catalog that are suited for certain people, if we could just convince the people to do 'em. I do consider myself as someone who has a good ear for a song. The way I used to do, Ken. If I heard ■ song that really just killed me, and my producer at the time said, "No, I don't think so," I still fought for just that one song. I said, "Hey, you can have your way on all the others, but I really believe in this song. And one of those songs was one that I got through the mail called, "Do You Ever Fool Around?" *(#5, 1978)* When I got that song and listened to it, I knew that song was made strictly for my voice, the range and everything. I had to convince Billy Sherrill to let me cut it. It was a Top Five hit all around the board.

Did you ever pass on a great song?

There was one that almost slipped by me though. When Norro Wilson presented "Roll On Big Mama" to me I said, "I don't think so. I just don't get it." He said, "Well, if you just trust me - I'm going to put airhorns, a truck cranking up, and the guitar going and it's going to *feel* good." He said, "You just wail it out there - I guarantee you that we've got a hit here." He was absolutely right. It's one of those songs that will last forever. It's in the Top Five of all trucking songs ever. It's in there with "Six Days On the Road," "Convoy," and all those songs like that.

When you hit the chorus in that song and sing, "The feel of the wheel delivers me.." - that's good ol' rock'n'roll.

Oh sure. Absolutely!

Why do you suppose truck driving songs have proven so popular down through the years? What is it that people relate to ■■ strongly.

Well, the one that I had, "Roll On Big Mama," I just think part of it was the feel of the song. You listen to that song and you feel like you're in a truck getting on down the Interstate. Whether you're in a car or in a truck, it just had that feel to it. I think a lot of 'em have to do with stories. The Red Sovine songs were all storytelling things about guys in trucks and the little boy who was a cripple and how all the truckers stopped to help him. There's just ■ lot of great truck songs out there.

We seem to relate to them as if they are all part of our own blue collar story.

Absolutely. You know I had another truckin' song that wasn't nearly as big as "Roll On Big Mama." It was ■ song called "She's "Long Legged," (#26 c&w, 1977) and it was about a truck "She's long legged, she rolls through the night like the wind." That was written by the same guy who wrote "Roll On Big Mama," Danny Darst.

You've had ■ lot of great moments in country music. "Soul Song" probably outsold anything you ever did.

Yes it did. It crossed over and hit #37 on the pop charts and was number one in country. I was presented a Gold Mike Award for getting over 250,000 sales, which was big back at that time.

Now, you did sell some records as part of The Uniques, was there ■ major difference in sales once you became a top country artist?

Yeah. I'll tell you, unless you have that magic "Judy In Disguise" type hit, it's hard to sell a lot of records on an independent label. When you get on ■ major country label, they've just got it all laid out so you can sell more records. Promotion and distribution, that's the key. Plus, you've got independent promotion people who are working your record all the time, they're screaming your name to all the stations and that's what it takes. It's ■ war out there, is what it is.

What was the major change that you noticed from your days with The Uniques and your days as ■ country superstar?

Well, I'll tell you - I guess the difference was that I went out and got a bus and everything. The traveling was a lot easier. During

the 60s, we always pulled a trailer, then we bought a van and had a guy who drove it and set up our equipment - but we traveled in a car. We always had a Cadillac or a Lincoln. There was five of us in the car and we were cramped up and everything. (Laughs.) That was one of the major differences right there, then, when you get a bus you have a lot of room and you can lay down and rest a little. It made a big difference.

You had a great string of country hits, was there a particular formula you and your team were following at the time?

Well, I have to give Al Gallico credit, he's a great song-plugger and publisher and he knew a great song when he heard it. He found a lot of the songs that I had approval of and I would bring a lot of the songs in too, but I think that was the secret to our success. We put out three or four songs before "If You Touch Me," and we thought for a while there that we weren't even going to get the deal signed with ABC-Dot. Once we hit the Top Ten then thing started happening. Then, after five years at ABC-Dot, he moved me to Epic Records.

You worked with Billy Sherrill there?

I stayed with Norro through the mid-70s, then about 1978 Billy Sherrill took me over at Epic. We had some success with songs like "Ten Minutes To Fall In Love" *(#6, 1978)*, "Red Wine and Blue Memories," "Do You Ever Fool Around," "Put Your Clothes Back On" *(#9, 1979)*, lots of good things. Towards the end of my career there at Epic, Ray Baker did some great song on me too. When Moe Bandy and I teamed as Moe & Joe, Ray Baker was producing those songs. We won three vocal duet awards as Moe & Joe, we were kind of the early Brooks & Dunn. *(Chuckles)*

Tell us how you and Moe Bandy came together as a team.

I was doing the Wembley Festival over in London, England and so was Moe. Ray Baker who was producing Moe at the time. One night Moe and I, Ray Baker, and my piano player Ansley Fleetwood went out to supper at the Hard Rock Café. Of all things, Willie & Waylon had just come out with "Good Hearted Woman." I said, "It's amazing 'Waylon & Willie' ring a bell. It's a man and a man singing together. I'll bet you if 'Moe & Joe' recorded a song we would register with the fans out there." So Ray Baker picked up on it, came back to Nashville and approached the label with it and they said, "We'll try three songs and see what happens." My piano player Ansley Fleetwood picked up on it and when he got back to Nashville, he wrote "Just Good Ol' Boys," and that's how it all came about.

Although you both had well-established solo careers, most people assumed that Moe & Joe was the main act.

Yes. Here's what happened. Moe & Joe became bigger than Moe by himself and Joe by himself, because of the three vocal duet awards that we won. We only had one number one record together and that was "Just Good Ol' Boys" *(#1, 1979)*. But we had about six or seven Top Tens together like "Tell Ol' I Ain't Here (He Better Get On Home)" *(#11, 1980)*, "Tell A Lie" *(#12, 1979)* "Holding The Bag" *(#7, 1979)*, "Hey Joe (Hey Moe)" *(#10, 1981)*, songs like that. So, it became a deal where Moe & Joe were kind of like a little cult thing, then when we put out that spoof on Boy George "Where's The Dress?" *(#8, 1984)* and won a lot of video awards, gosh we were pretty high on the totem pole.

Did this success adversely affect your solo career?

Absolutely, it affected both our solo careers. People were more interested in hearing a Moe & Joe song because we had that little cult following for our off-the-wall songs.

"All These Things" seems to be your lucky song - you did it with the Uniques, had a big hit with it in country, and you redid it on your last album.

Well, that song has become a country classic, it gets played all the time, it's a great two-step. When I re-recorded it for the *"Somewhere Under The Rainbow"* album, I just took myself back to the 60s. I did "Bony Maronie," "All These Things," "If You Don't Know Me By Now," all the soulful type song - that's what I wanted to do. I went back to my 60s days for that album.

You were one of the biggest country stars of the 70s and 80s, I don't know if there was anyone bigger.

I'll say this - I was one of the most airplayed artists of the 70s

and 80s. During 1976 I think it was, I won the Billboard Singles award because I had four charted singles in one year. The reason for that, after I left ABC-Dot, every time Epic would put out a single, they would throw out a single - and they would all chart. There's only been two people to have a number one record after they've left a label. Charlie Rich and me. Charlie Rich - RCA put out "There Won't Be Anymore" it hit number one after he had struck with "Behind Closed Doors" and "The Most Beautiful Girl In the World.." Mine was "All These Things," that was put out after I left the label.

Did you feel strange when you had competing records out?

Oh, it broke my heart. There I was just signed with Epic and a lot of the ABC-Dot records were beating out what I was doing on Epic. The one that really beat us out was "All These Things" which hit number one and we had out a great song on Epic at the time, it stopped in the 20s, because it's hard to compete with yourself.

These days, how do you manage to please both your rock and country fans?

Well, let me say this, a true fan is worth more than all the money in the world because they're just so into what you're doing. I'm still getting letters from people who went to my shows in the 60s. Every once in a while I do reunion dates with the Uniques. When we do that we just have a ball! When I do those shows I just do the 60s songs, no country music at all. The response is incredible - for a lot of people there, we had played their junior and senior proms, or they were at those teeny-bopper places we played. We just bring back a lot of memories when we do that show.

Last time we spoke, your son Tony had put out a pretty good album.

Well, Dreamworks put out one single and he got the axe for some reason. So now we're looking for another label to pick him up. We've put out a single on him - it's on CDX Volume 315 - it's cut number 16 on that CDX, a song called "Doctor Jesus." Randy Travis has it on one of his albums, Ken Mellons had cut the song earlier. We're just trying to get some action on him where another major label will pick him up.

Is that your greatest impact on his life, that you showed him the way into the music business?

I think so. Tony worked with me on the road for a while in the early 70s. He's traveling with me some now. Sometimes he does about 25 minutes on my show and he's just a great singer.

How many dates a year are you doing now, Joe?

Not as many as I used to. Probably in the neighborhood of 40 or 50 dates a year. I used to do upwards of 250 dates a year.

What's one of your more unusual fan memories?

Well, I was working in England, '78 or '79, and of all people to come and get an autograph from me, because he was a Uniques fan, was Elvis Costello. Isn't that amazing? At the time I didn't really know much him, but he had worked his way backstage and he told me that he had the *"Uniquely Yours"* album.

What's happening with you lately? I saw you on RFD-TV.

Yes, I did Ralph Emery's show and I also did this thing with David Frizzell called *David Frizzell & Friends* - I'm on that compilation - and that was on RFD-TV too. There's fifteen of us on that special - it was a great special. Gene Watson, T Graham Brown, Jimmy Fortune, Johnny Lee - gosh, I could go on and on with names of people on that special. I did that and a few shows out on the road. As a matter of fact, I just worked with Moe Bandy last week. We were in Belleville, TX doing the Austin County Fair & Rodeo. They had a tremendous crowd down there.

Are you still producing records?

Yes, I am. I've also been working with Jeff Griffith, he's a guy I produced. *["If It Ain't One Thing, It's Another,"* Arrowhead, 2007.] We've been making a little noise with Jeff on the Music Row charts and the Texas charts. I have also produced a album on Bekka Bramlett. She is the daughter of Delaney and Bonnie Bramlett. I'll tell you what. She's the singingest female I have ever worked with in my life. We have got some things that will get played on country radio.

That's good to hear. What label have you got her on?

Right now we're shopping it. We just finished up ten sides and we're shopping the deal. I'm really working hard on this project. We did a truck driving song on her that's just incredible. It's on this new album. It's a female trucking song and it's going to be big. I don't want to tell you the title right now, but I wanted to tell you that this trucking song is going to be one of the biggest trucking songs ever by a female. I saw her on Don Imus. She goes on the road and backs Delbert McClinton and sings background for Vince Gill some. So, I saw her on *Imus in the Morning* and I was so knocked out that I got her number and called her up. That's how I got this whole project started.

Will you be recording again soon?

Well, here's the deal. Right now I'm really into producing and I'm into breaking Bekka Bramlett and Jeff Griffith because I believe in both of them. You're not going to believe this Bekka Bramlett album. It's really, really good. I recorded her with some tracks that are country tracks, but she sings 'em in her own way. She makes 'em very believable with her very soulful voice.

What about your son Tony, is he still in the business?

Tony is still writing songs and he's got a couple on hold with George Strait. But the new Billy Currington album, there's a cut on there called "Heal Me," and Tony wrote that song. This album just shipped last week and Tony's got a cut on there that could possibly end up being a single.

What's happening with the Uniques?

About a month and a half ago, we did the James Burton Foundation benefit show at the Municipal Auditorium in Shreveport. Man we got a standing ovation. We did "Not Too Long Ago," that we had in '65 and we did "All These Things." The other people on that show were Delbert McClinton, EmmyLou Harris, Charlie McCoy, Billy Swan - I could just go on and on with names that were on that show. It was a magic night and they had a great sound system. The Municipal Auditorium is where Elvis started out, you know, and all those great country people - Hank Williams and everybody. It was where they had the Louisiana Hayride.

What should your fans know about the Joe Stampley style?

Well, I grew up in a little small town and like I say, I was listening to Hank Williams and Don Gibson - all the great ones. But whether it's country music or rock'n'roll music, whatever sounds good to my ear, I'm going to appreciate it because I'm not going to get clogged up in one area of music.

Thanks so much for bringing me up to date, Joe. I always tell people that besides being a great artist, you're a great interview subject.

Well, I never had no problem talking. *(Mutual laughter)*

My thanks to the inimitable Joe Stampley. You can check out his latest doings at www.joestampley.com.

Ten Joe Stampley Hits You Should Hear

1.) Roll On Big Mama (#1 c&w, 1975)
2.) Soul Song (#1 c&w; #37 pop, 1972)
3.) All These Things (#1 c&w, 1976)
4.) Everyday I Have to Cry (#14 c&w, 1977)
5.) Red Wine and Blue Memories (#6 c&w, 1978)

6.) [w/ Moe Bandy] Just Good Ol' Boys (#1 c&w, 1979)
7.) [w/ Moe Bandy] Hey Joe (Hey Moe), (#10 c&w, 1981)
8.) Double Shot of My Baby's Love (#8 c&w, 1983)
9.) [w/ The Uniques] You Ain't Tuff, (1967)
10.) [w/The Uniques] Please Come Home for Christmas (#32 pop, 1967)

Joe Stampley's 10 Favorite Trucking Songs

1.) Roll On Big Mama, Joe Stampley (for obvious reasons)
2.) She's Long Legged, Joe Stampley (ditto)
3.) Six Days on the Road, Dave Dudley
4.) Phantom 309, Red Sovine
5.) Giddy Up Go, Red Sovine
6.) Teddy Bear, Red Sovine
7.) Royal Purple Peterbilt, Leland Martin (From the album, *I'll Pick the Guitar, You Drive the Truck*, DMG, 2008)
8.) 18 Wheels and a Dozen Roses, Kathy Mattea
9.) Drivin' My Life Away, Eddie Rabbit
10.) Girl On the Billboard, Del Reeves

Spare Tire: "She's Long Legged" *by Joe Stampley (If Joe says it's great, who are we to question his infinite wisdom?)*

Wheel #6 "Truck Drivin' Son-Of-A-Gun" by Dave Dudley (#3, 1965)
By Bosco/Illustration by Slink Moss

I had the (mis)fortune of being a good Jewish boy from the north side of Chicago whose father was a little on the mental side.

He decided one day that he wanted to be a Jewish cowboy and ride in rodeos. Not a bad idea if you're doing it yourself, but he decided to bundle up my mom, my brother and myself and move us to the middle of nowhere Iowa.

Gee, thanks dad.

Well, along with the change of real estate, all things cowboy were quickly adopted: Job (obviously you can not be a cowboy if you're not working on a ranch, right?), dress and music.

Luckily my old man went in for Outlaw country with a side helping of traditional cowboy/trucker style when it came to the music. So I grew up listening to the likes of David Allan Coe, Waylon and Willie, Johnny Cash and a healthy dose of the faves of trucker music aficionados like Red Sovine, Buck Owens and many others.

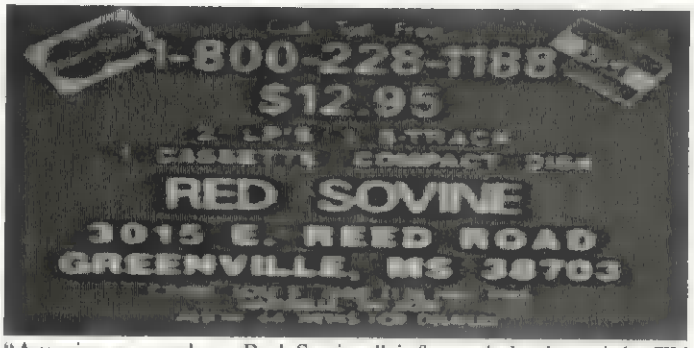
One of the stand out tunes I remember from being in the truck (yep, you have to have a pick-up truck to be a cowboy too) heading to and from the ranch was "Tiger in My Tank" by Jim Nesbitt (#15, 1965). Jim came to prominence in the 60s with some country/comedy bits including one about President Kennedy, and also charted with many country singles. The basis for the song came from old Esso Gasoline ads promising a 'tiger in your tank'. It's one of those songs I find myself singing when I'm driving down the highway or just tooling around the city. It's infectious in a good way. Officially though, it was about a car and not a truck, but another favorite from those days was Dave Dudley's "Truck Drivin' Son-Of-A-Gun," a classic about a womanizing road warrior with, "a cute little gal in every eastern town from Boston to St Lou" and "a good old girl in Knoxville but man I forgot her name, but not her figure." Dudley's monotone is pure trucking magic when he declares himself to be "a kiss stealing, wheeling dealing, truck driving son of a gun." If you've never hear this, you need to – you can probably find it (and Nesbitt's petro classic) on some country or trucker compilation tape at your local truck stop.

Spare Tire: "Lady Hitchiker" *by Gene Tracy – Many of the 8-tracks/cassettes/CDs (depending on the decade) purchased by truckers at truckstops are not music but rather comedy by Southern comics like Jr. Samples, Ron White, Jerry Clower, Ben Colder, and Jeff Foxworthy. The King of Truckstop Comedy is Gene Tracy (1927-1979) a ribald storyteller/jokester in the Redd Foxx mold, and many of his routines, like this one, were aimed directly at truckers.*

Wheel #7 "Phantom 309" by Red Sovine (#9, 1967)

TRUCKERS, TRUCKSTOPS AND 8-TRACK TAPES

By F.R. "Russ" Forster, Former Editor *8-Track Mind Magazine*
(Illustration: Heather McAdams)



"America remembers Red Sovine," informed the late-night TV commercial from 1990 promoting a posthumous collection of beloved trucker hits entitled *The Best Of Red Sovine*. After a list of Red's most memorable songs from across his remarkable 35-year career (including the truly iconic "Teddy Bear" and "Phantom 309") came the sentence that really caught my attention: "Available on 2 LPs, cassette, 8-TRACK, and all-new compact disc." In 1990 there was almost no place to find a brand new 8-track tape except this curious TV offer, and this might be the only time ANY title was released on 8-track and CD simultaneously. Why was this famed purveyor of trucker anthems on 8-track at this late date, I wondered?

The answer was revealed to me over the course of the next few years as I worked with a group of oddball Chicago 8-track enthusiasts on an 8-track fanzine called *8-Track Mind* (*8-TM*, for short). In the winter of 1993 we put out an issue devoted to so-called "bootleg" 8-track tapes (illegally reproduced versions of big name albums where royalties were not paid and licenses were not obtained). As part of the research for the issue we reproduced a "Buyers Bulletin" that was printed on the inner sleeve of Phonogram Records LP releases circa 1975-1977 warning consumers about the scourge of what they refer to as "pirated" tapes. The essay explaining the "headline" of the piece ("Tape Piracy…Everyone's Problem"), written with unexpected authority by "UPI Feature Columnist Bruce Meyer" dourly pronounces that "…in the long run, it's bound to hurt you – the record consumer – because your money is going not to support the performers you enjoy, but to line the pockets of a criminal."

More pro-music industry rhetoric fills Mr. Meyer's defense of then-recently federally defined corporate copyrights, followed by a primer on how to spot and report illicit tapes, but the most interesting part of the "Bulletin" is a small inset piece entitled, "Lewis One-Man Pirate Smasher," detailing the exploits of rowdy '50s rocker Jerry Lee Lewis in literally stamping out a bootleg 8-track tape display at a truck stop he happened onto.

"...Lewis recently pulled up to a gas station in the south and noticed a rack of pirate tapes in the station. He asked who owned the rack and when told than an unidentified man serviced it weekly from the trunk of his car, Lewis took the rack outside the station and smashed it. When the station operator asked him what he should do when the route man came and asked what happened to his rack, Lewis replied, "Tell him 'Killer' was here."

From this story, I began to get a picture of how truckers, truckstops and 8-tracks formed a symbiotic relationship in the '70s that was as hard to break as the tapes themselves. Stories of truckers who still had 8-track players and plenty of 8-track tapes well into the '90s spilled onto the pages of *8-TM*, as well as stories of truck stop stores with dusty old racks of 8-tracks still for sale to those stubborn truckers (and the pop-culture savvy readers of the magazine itself). CDs and cassettes were for sissies in their Porsches and BMWs; 8-tracks were the big manly format with tapes that could survive Armageddon (if they didn't break at the splice first). And these truckers saw no reason to line the pockets of the record companies re-buying their favorite music on some newfangled format. 8-tracks got them through the '70s and '80s all right, so why not the '90s?

These days those old rigs with have been long retired, as have the truckers who ran them cross-country, keeping our economy pumping. 8-tracks, like the immortal self-sacrificing Big Joe in Red Sovine's hit "Phantom 309," are gone, remembered only as ghosts to a few remaining grizzled old convoy runners. But if you run into a bar serving Colorado Cool-Aid to some of the truckers who once had plenty of Red Sovine 8-tracks in their rigs, you best not make fun of that music technology long-discredited unless you're ready for a serious barroom brawl. The bond of trucker, truckstop and 8-track tape runs THAT deep.

Get more info about 8-tracks and 8-Track Mind Magazine *at www.8trackheaven.com, and check out the original TV commercial for* The Best Of Red Sovine *at www.youtube.com/watch?v=JPrfsNhLkr4.*

***Spare Tire: "Truck Driver's Prayer"** by Red Sovine – Red doesn't pretend to be a trucker on this, rather he says he's just a country singer who really appreciates that truckers are the safest, nicest, most courteous drivers on earth. After kissing up to truckers for more than half the song (or "blowing smoke" as he says) Red eventually reads a prayer for truckers he claims was sent to him by a trucker who found it at a truck stop. Well, if you have to pander, pandering to truckers seems legit. (Jake Austen)*

Wheel #8 A Tombstone Every Mile" by Dick Curless (#5, 1965)

Sing Me Back Home by Dana Jennings (Faber and Faber, 2008) – reviewed by Jake Austen. Pity the poor pundit who mistakenly calls *The New York Times* editor and New England–native Dana Jennings a member of the cultural elite. While Jennings may have a hard time defending his publication as the voice of the working class, he's got 200 pages of whoop ass for anyone who thinks a New Hampshire upbringing equals lattes and prep school. During the '60s and early '70s, the city of Kingston, he assures us, was "an unforgiving land of demons [where] we lived on rock and stump, swamp and gravel, on a swatch of land infested with snakes, spiders, and tar-paper shacks." While his recent book *Sing Me Back Home* is ostensibly a tribute to the artistry and cultural significance of the country music created and consumed between 1950 and 1970, Jennings's main mission seems to be to out-moonshine, out-illiteracy and out-outhouse any Southerner who thinks "rural" only exists downwind of the Mason-Dixon. By using the magnificent music of the classic Opry-era as a framework and a style guide, Jennings tells his family's story with the same sort of sublime grace that allows Porter Wagoner to be melodramatic without being dishonest, or Merle Haggard to be defensive without being an asshole. Like the great country songwriters of yore, Jennings loves storytelling and language. Even read as merely a music-history book, *Sing* triumphantly describes Patsy Cline's phrasing, Johnny Cash's boldness and Dolly Parton's desire for assimilation. Country music has never shied away from writing its own histrionic history. But unlike George Jones, with his concerns about "Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes," Jennings is fine with dismissing contemporary country; he's concerned with who's gonna buy the CD box sets. And, of course, he wants to remind us that Dick Curless not only sang about the deathly dangers of truck driving in the Northeast in his greatest tune, "A Tombstone Every Mile," but he was also a New England native! Maine-born Curless was one of the rare icons of truckdriving music that had some treacherous trucking experience (when he put his C&W career, which the eye-patched "Baron of Country Music" launched in the late 40s, on hold to serve in Korea he was assigned to truck driving duties). His signature song was released in 1965, and told the tale of a "stretch of road up north in Maine that's never, ever, ever, seen a smile/If they buried all the truckers lost in them Woods there'd be a tombstone every mile." But Jennings doesn't focus on truckers as danger-defying heroes in his book, rather he eloquently argues that the characters in trucking songs throw in their lot with the drifting, rambling "Lost Highway" dwellers of c&w lore. "Trucks," he writes, "were

never as romantic as trains, were more about hard work (and hemorrhoids) than freedom. Still 18-wheelers are an important part of the economy of rambling. The trucker, though he has to go back home eventually, has a few hours or days of open road ahead in which he can be ■ desperado on wheels." Nonetheless, the truckin' song canonized in the book is a tale of pure truckdriving heroism, though not his homeboy's ode to noble, duty-driven truckin' death. Rather he spotlights the King of Bluegrass, Jimmy Martin's classic "Widowmaker," the tale of Billy Mack, a trucker who will never see his beloved Wanda Ann again because he drove his rig into oblivion rather than plow into a stalled busload of kids, honoring that "one life for ten has always been the diesel driver's code." Ultimately Jennings argues that the good, hard luck folk of rural New England lived by codes as honorable as Billy Mack's. If only we could say the same for some of his interview fabricating, Bush administration free-ride giving, pithily-presented etymology researching, difficult crossword puzzle composing, Mainstream Media liberal-leaning colleagues at the *New York Times*!

Spare tire: *"Give Me 40 Acres (To Turn This Rig Around)" by The Willis Brothers (#9, 1964) – A far more light-hearted turn on the theme of truckin' in New England is presented in this tale of a rookie trucker reduced to tears by the narrow, congested, tangled, one-way city streets of Boston. (Jake Austen)*

Wheel #9: "East Bound and Down" by Jerry Reed (#2, 1977)

The Jerry Reed Interview by Ken Burke

Illustrations by Archer Prewitt and Johnny Sampson

Jerry Reed's death (September 1, 2008) has deprived country music of one of its greatest talents and personalities. Indeed, whether writing and singing great country music, playing his distinctive gut-string guitar, or appearing in movies as a motor-mouthed truck-driver, there was simply no one quite like him. Besides his own recordings for Capitol, NRC, Columbia, RCA, and Southern Tracks, the six-string virtuoso played on sessions that yielded hits for Bobby Bare, Joan Baez, Ian & Sylvia, the Beau Brummels, and most notably, Elvis Presley ("Guitar Man," "U.S. Male.") Best of all were the Grammy winning instrumental LPs with his friend, mentor and idol Chet Atkins.

Despite 41 Top-40 country hits, two solid Top Ten pop records ("Amos Moses," "When You're Hot You're Hot"), three short-lived TV series, and roles in ■ dozen films, Reed - born Jerry Reed Hubbard - is probably best remembered as Cledus, the basset hound toting trucker in the *Smokey & The Bandit* movies. Further, this issue's theme is best addressed by Reed's 1977 hit, "East Bound and Down" (#2 c&w). Drawn from the *Smokey & the Bandit* soundtrack, it's a a peppy little ditty that lyrically lays out the plot of the movie ("Boys are thirsty in Atlanta and there's beer in Texarkana..."). Productionwise, it plays out like ■ pop producer thinks country music should sound like. The singer's vocal is double-tracked, the chorus singers are heavily mixed to the front, and a glittering banjo figure fights with a heavily FX'd electric guitar. What makes the record listenable? Reed's attitude, snappy and defiant, shines through all the layers of sonic mud, conjuring an image of man deeply committed to driving like a maniac until his load is delivered.

When I spoke to Reed in 2006, his hitmaking days were long gone. However, the 69-year-old, three-time Grammy Award winner decided to release his first album in six years, *Jerry Reed Live, Still!* (On his son-in-law's R2K label.) The title proved an interesting bit of self-mockery by the artist. This writer remembers seeing Reed on the old *Glen Campbell Goodtime Hour*, singing his humorous anti-smoking hit "Another Puff." By the time of our interview his voice had been coarsened by the ravages of emphysema and arthritis limited his amount of time playing his beloved guitar. As a result, by the time of the recording he no longer toured, but ■ the mix of classic hits and a few new songs show, he was still capable of entertaining with humor and sass.

Told that 20 minutes with Reed via a conference call was available, this writer was alternately honored - I have always been a fan of Reed's - and worried. Cautioned not to tire him out and fearing a monosyllabic interview with ■ very sick man, I spent all night jotting down questions that would both help me and interest him.

To my great delight, Reed exhibited every bit of his trademark energetic persona. (I still love how he puts that rhythmic two-syllable Southern feel behind the exclamation "*son*!") Quick on the draw and very responsive in the time allotted, he spoke affectionately about his recordings, Elvis, Chet, how he tuned his guitar, a bit about the movies, and the classic songs featured on his final live album.

Ken Burke: Did you know that there is a very fine compilation [*Here I Am*] of your early stuff out on Bear Family?

Jerry Reed: Oh, I know it! I know it and if you play it I'll kill you. You understand what I just said Kenneth, don't touch it. I was 18-years-old, dumber than lead. All I wanted was Hank Williams's band and turn me loose. *(Laughs)* Yeah, I've got a copy of that.

Collectors think you showed great talent as ■ rockabilly.

JR: Oh! Well, I did. You know I grew up - when I was a teenager, that's when rock'n'roll came along. I grew up in Atlanta man. I mean listen Ken, you'd go to the Covered Wagon - clubs like that - the Sports Arena, and you played everything from hoedowns to "Blueberry Hill" to Chuck Berry to you just name it. It was rock'n'roll time in the 50s, and that's when I was loading my guns.

Even during that early era, you were ■ very versatile guitarist. Where did that come from?

Well, it's very simple, Ken. God sent me here the way he sent me. It's like mama says, "It's in him and its gotta come out." Atlanta was ■ great training ground. I grew up on country and gospel and then when I was a teenager, here comes R&B, blues, and rock'n'roll and pop. You had to play all that stuff at dances you know. That was kind of my on the job training, if you will.

There's a lot of funky blues in your style.

Well yeah, I'm raw sewage. *(Laughs)*

Were there any particular blues players you listened to?

How about B.B.?

B.B. King?

There ain't but one, son- it's B.B.! When you listen to B.B. King, what else have you got? It was like, "I've heard everything now."

When you were recording at Capitol with Ken Nelson, was it his intention at that time to turn you into a rockabilly along the lines of ■ Gene Vincent of Elvis Presley?

No, he was just going to let me be Jerry Reed. He was such a sweetheart of a guy. I'm just sorry we couldn't be successful for Ken. We were with him for four years and I was too young. I had my head up in the clouds or in the ground or somewhere and it just wasn't my time, Ken. It's that simple. It's kind of ■ bitter sweetness. I'm sorry it didn't happen and I'm glad it didn't happen because when it happened, it happened the right way.

Part of your making it the right way was your early success as ■ songwriter. Rockabilly fans know that you wrote "Crazy Legs" for Gene Vincent but your first real big hit was ■■ the flip side of Brenda Lee's 1960 hit "I'm Sorry."

Yes it was. I'll tell you a little story. Now, I'm in the army *[1958-1961]*, just recently been married and got our first kid. You know what ■ private makes in the army. Well, we were starving to death. I had written this song called "That's All You Gotta Do." Unbeknownst to me, Bill Lowery my publisher had sent it to Nashville and Owen Bradley, who was producing Brenda Lee. She cut that thing and Bill didn't even tell me. He kept it as a surprise. So, I'm riding home from the post one day and I hear that record. Well, I almost wrecked my car. *(Laughs)* You know, I'm saying, "Wait a minute. Hold it! I wrote that song!" It went to number six in the nation and "I'm Sorry" went to number one and it sold ■ million records and I was starving to death. Can you just imagine? Then a year later, I write one called "Misery Loves Company" that Porter Wagoner recorded and it went to number one and stayed *[on the charts]* for 29 weeks. Well, that's the money we lived off of while we were in the army and used what was left to move up here to Nashville, Ken. Ain't that a story?

It sure is. You must of have been one of the best paid privates in the whole U.S. Army.

Oh yeah, I'd pay guys to go in there and pull K.P. for me.

Were you able to pursue musical aspirations in the army?

Well, here's what happened in the army, Ken. I was at Fort Jackson for boot camp. Then, after boot camp you either went to advanced infantry or somewhere else. We had one guy go to artillery and I went to radio school - because I had an ear, you know? I was ■ musician and I had a good ear so I could pick up that Morse Code real quick. So, they sent me to radio school and I was at Fort Jackson for six months. Well, Roger Miller and Faron Young were attached to something called the Circle A Wranglers. Back when they were in the service, they had special services. Well, they canned that, but they kept the Circle A Wranglers and attached them to the Third Army band. Well, Pappy Burns - Jethro Burns' brother of Homer & Jethro - his brother was like a sergeant first class and he was the operations sergeant in charge of the band. They came to Fort Jackson and I had performed with them and I asked them to requisition me down there so I wouldn't have to go to Korea or Germany. Well, I was in the shot line and they called my name and said, "The following people, fall out." They called my name and I knew I wasn't going to Germany and I wound up with the Circle A Wrangler band attached to the Third Army Band and that's where I spent the rest of my army career, picking and singing.

That's good duty!

Oh man, plus I was only 18 miles from home. Ha-ha! God was looking after me.

A friend of mine has a record you did in 1962 called "Hully Gully Guitar."

On Columbia.

That's right. I've heard this and I think you could have been a rock'n'roll instrumentalist anytime you wanted. 2 of your Columbia singles hit the bottom of the pop charts. Had they been bigger hits, is that the way you would have jumped?

Ah, that wasn't in the cards, Ken. You can speculate all you want to but it just wasn't in the cards. My time was just about to come, but it wasn't quite really there for Columbia. I did a thing called "Goodnight Irene" with Jerry Reed and The Hully Gullys *(#99 pop, 1962)*. That was the biggest thing I sold on Columbia. I think it sold a quarter of a million albums, but after that, it kind of went downhill. Because it wasn't time. It wasn't time until Chet Atkins said, "You need to come over here and let me record you." Because he's ■ guitar player and he said, "I know how to record you."

Did Chet know the full extent of what you could do?

Well yeah, he had already recorded two of my instrumentals. See, I've composed 70 instrumentals for me and Chet over the 18 or 20 years we were together. I had met Chet earlier in Atlanta when he came down to do a show and when I sent him "Down Home," which was an instrumental, he just fell in love with it and recorded it. So, he was sort of my entree when I came to Nashville. He started using me on sessions and things, Ken, and I got to know him and he wanted to record me. That's when everything started hopping and popping, son. That's when things started to get good.

Whose idea was it to bring the gut string guitar up-front, yours or Chet's?

It was mine because I love to play a gut string, because it's pure. That's what I used on sessions and that's what I'm comfortable with because I'm a finger picker. I love to play gut string guitar. What I'd do is I would get my strings real close to the fret board where they would rattle a little bit, tune it down where it's funky and make it sound funky.

Was that an E tuning?

Well, no - I never used the E tuning. I used an open G tuning a lot of times. I was bad about tuning strings down and up to fit my left hand. On "Guitar Man," I tuned E down to D, and to make it lay under my fingers the way I needed it to, I tuned the B string up to a C#, so it would lay a straight line underneath my fingers. So then, I'd have fingers free to do the boogie woogie.

Was Chet more influential to you as a producer or a picker?

A picker, absolutely. Well, Chet Atkins is the most copied guitar player that ever lived. Chet Atkins *is* the guitar. There'll never be another one. Sure man, boy when I heard him play I thought, "Man, if I don't learn to play like that, I'll probably die. I've got to get my guitar and learn to play like that." I sat around forever trying to get my thumb to play rhythm while my fingers played a melody. Boy the day I first accomplished that, I thought I had hung the moon, son. "Are you kidding me? Listen to this. I'm playing just like Chet Atkins. Holy Smoke! Look at this." Oh yeah!

What's your favorite memory of the late Chet Atkins?

Those first two albums we did. *Me and Chet*, *Me and Jerry*, and sitting in his office kibitzing around, teaching him instrumentals. Then, listening to the consummate professional play it back. Ooh my lord, I can't tell you son, what a feeling that was like, Ken.

On the back of one of your albums you mentioned that you wanted to learn how Chet played a certain piece. You said, after he had showed it to you, you were up practicing it all through the night and you still didn't quite get it. By contrast, was Chet a quick study when you were trying to teach him material of yours?

No! It's not easy learning finger pieces, but Chet is faster than the rest of the world, I'll tell you that. I'd show him how I fingered it and if it was a tune he liked - we'd sit in his office, I'd show it to him, and he'd make a little demo and the next time I'd see him he would go over it. I'd refresh him and he'd change a thing or two here, but man, nobody had hands like Chet Atkins. Nobody. Nobody! Wasn't but one. There'll never be another.

I feel that way about Jerry Reed.

Well, there'll never be another, that's for sure. *(Laughs)*

There's a drive to your guitar playing I don't find in Chet's.

Well, like I said, I'm funky - I'm raw sewage. I think that's what people liked about my records, the feeling. Because I wanted to get those musicians in the spirit and the only way I could do it was play it on the guitar, they'd hook in, and here we 'd go. Boy, it was great, Ken.

Let's talk about the songs on the new album. Most are...

...They're the hits! We're doing a *show*, Ken.

You had so many big hits, was it difficult to narrow them down for this album?

Yeah, you can only do so many in an hour and get out there and kibitz around. We probably do about 13 songs, but I cut up a lot when I'm out there. I tell the people, "If you didn't come out here to have a good time, go up to the house." So, we probably do about 13 or 14 songs but we just put 10 of 'em on the album.

Some of the new material on the album is interesting. I liked "Father Time and Gravity."

I wrote that for you. *(Laughs)* This song is for anybody over 30. For anybody under 30, it's previews of coming attractions.

The line in that song about the Viagra incident made me laugh a little harder than I should have. It sounds like it might be a true experience.

Well, it ain't. But I've heard tales. *(Laughs)* A guy just falling dead. I had to put that in there, didn't I?

It reminds me of that ad for Cialis. They claim if you have male excitement after four hours you should call the doctor.

(Laughs) I tell you, this world has gone to hell in a hand basket, I'm telling you what. When that's all you focus on, something's wrong somewhere. The average time is three minutes. What are you going to do with the rest of the three hours and 57 minutes?

I don't know - hang a hat on it, something useful. *(Reed laughs)* **By contrast, I know that you've always had a gospel bent to your songs.**

I grew up on it.

On "A Brand New Me," I thought you were truly in your element singing with all the guys, and you were singing from the heart.

Oh, that's lovely. That's what I grew up on. Listen, that gets the biggest round of applause other than "East Bound." I'm telling, when we get through with that, those people are throwing babies up in the air. Because everybody loves quartet music - good ol' Southern gospel music. You can't get away from it. It's like a runaway truck.

Do you believe as Elvis Presley did that rock'n'roll music was based on Southern gospel?

Naw. Rock'n'roll - I think they're just looking for something to say. Gospel music has been here since time in memorial. Who knows what made rock'n'roll? I grew up in it and when it came along I grew up listening to Ray Charles, B.B. King, and I grew up listening to quartets - the Statesmen, The Harmonaires, church music and Hank Williams and all that. I think in Elvis' mind, I believe that was just an opinion and a feeling that he had that what prompted him to really bump and grind was that he probably went to a hard-shell Baptist church or one of these Church of God - Holiness Churches where they really get in the spirit, Ken. But I don't think it has anything to do with rock'n'roll. I really don't. I never associated it with church music - with quartet music. But I think what he was saying was that "my music is in the spirit, just like my church music was always very spiritual and energetic. And, when you get in the spirit, man you've got to move." I think that's what he was referring to - just between me, you, and the fencepost. You know what an opinion's like - everyone's got one.

Since "Guitar Man" is on the new album with along with several of your other classics, let's talk about 'em. Tell us a little about the "Guitar Man" session. Were you a little bit worried that Elvis was trying to take a hit away from you when he recorded your song?

What, are you serious?

I've heard it both ways.

Well, you need to hear it from the horses mouth. *(Mock pleading)* "Come *on*, Elvis. Get *on* it, Elvis!" *(Laughs)* Are you kiddin' me? Lord no. I was, "Elvis is going to cut *my* song." You think I cared about my record? Have you lost your mind? *(Laughter)*

Did you feel that when you went into that session you'd have a hard time adapting your guitar style to what Elvis did?

No! Because that's why they brought me in there because Elvis wanted it to sound like my record. I was the finger-picker and them guitar players didn't know how I was tuned up, they

couldn't play with their fingers. They couldn't play what I played anyway and that's what Elvis wanted to hear. So, I got in there and I tuned that thing all up funky and I hit that intro, his face lit up, and here we went. *(Laughs)* I had the time of my life.

It's a great record and the extended version where you guys whip into "What'd I Say," is a real nice touch. Was that just spontaneous?

Oh yeah. That was just Elvis doing some of that church stuff.

In the studio, how did Elvis work differently from you?

It wasn't any different. Except he was pretty and I wasn't. Best looking man I ever laid my eyes on. Made me wonder if I wasn't born wrong.

Did you get a chance to deal with Scotty Moore and D.J. Fontana very much?

Oh, I recorded sessions down at Scotty's studio but I never hung out with Scotty and D.J., no, no, no, no, no. They went a totally different route. He had a studio back in the 60s down on 19th street. I have been in there recording many times. I knew him. I met him. But we never hung out, no.

When you were playing on "Guitar Man" *(#43, pop, 1967)*, **"U.S. Male"***(#28, pop, 1967)* **and some of the other things you did for Elvis - did Scotty and D.J. give you any advice on how to play behind Elvis?**

They weren't on those sessions. They were all Nashville studio pickers - Bob Moore on bass, Buddy Harmon on drums, Chip Young on rhythm guitar, Charlie McCoy on harmonica. You know, he used the A players when he was recording in Nashville. D.J. and Scotty weren't involved.

What can you tell me about the songs "U.S. Male" and "Tupelo Mississippi Flash?" It seems like if they weren't written for Elvis, then they were about him.

Elvis had nothing to do with either one of 'em. After we cut "Guitar Man," this steel player said, "Sing him another one, Reed." I said, "No, I've got one, that's enough." Elvis said, "No, have you got anything else?" I said, "You might like the 'U.S. Mail,' I don't know." "Play it!" So, I played it and he said, "Let's cut it." That's how it happened. Now, "Tupelo Mississippi Flash," I wrote that a long time before I met Elvis and it wasn't about him. It was just a cut-up song.

Sort of like Bobby Bare's "All-American Boy," where it's about that type of singer?

Oh yeah. It's about how guys in the industry screw up sometimes by overlooking something just because they're prejudiced about the way you look or something. That's what it's all about.

By contrast, was "Alabama Wildman" *(#22, c&w, 1972)* **specifically about you?**

Oh yeah - they's a lot of stories about daddies that don't understand. My daddy was a cotton mill man. He didn't understand anything about playing a guitar for a living. I remember one time he told me, "You're going to wind up in jail." *(Laughs)* "Sittin' around playing that guitar all the time....you oughta get you a job! A real job." So, that's what the song is about.

I won't keep you too much longer, but I do have a few more questions.

Well, my hand's going to sleep while holding the phone and it's *your* fault. If I get a bill from this, I'm going to send it to you. I might have carpal tunnel. *(Laughs)*

Can you get carpal tunnel in your ear?

(Laughs) No, mostly wax.

You did "Amos Moses"*(#8, pop, #16, c&w, 1970)* **on the new live set. Did Tony Joe White's "Polk Salad Annie" have any impact on that? Where did that song come from?**

To answer the first part, no. Didn't nobody have nothin' to do with nothin'. I just liked the name "Amos Moses." I just decided to make him a coon-ass. Do you know what a coon-ass is?

That's a Cajun?

That's right. See, he was a Cajun and I had him trapping alligators and there's a verse in there about tying a rope around his waist? I played Chet the song and when we cut that he said, "Have you ever heard the story about Freddie Hart?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, Freddie Hart's daddy used to tie a rope around his waist and throw him in the swamp and then jerk him back in the boat when the alligators come out." (Laughs.) So, I wrote that verse in the song.

I didn't know that.

Well now you do, see?

The guitar sound - the remarkable swamp blues sound - did you have to trick up your amp in anyway to get that?

No, I just turned it on "11" and let it rip.

My introduction to you came during the "Amos Moses" and "When You're Hot You're Hot"*(#9, pop, #1, c&w, 1971)* **period. Were you surprised when "When You're Hot, You're Hot" because such a massive pop hit?**

Well, I figured it was going to do pretty well following "Amos Moses." It sold a million records. I said, "Well, they'll know who I am anyway." But it was so infectious and I've sung it so many times now that I despise it.

Are you kidding?

(Chuckles) I *hate* that song. I've sung until my nose bleeds. But if I don't sing it on a show, somebody will come up while I'm signing autographs and they'll come up and say, "You didn't sing 'When You're Hot, You're Hot.'" I'll say, "Oh Lord...I've got to put it back in the show."

On the live album, some voices sing the la-la-la part. Is that your guys singing that?

That's my guys! You know, they put on these wigs and the audience just starts falling down.

At one point you turn to the audience and say, "You people are sick. They're ugly."

What happens is my guitar player steps up front stage and starts begging them to applaud the girl singers, and I've got to listen to all that stuff. *(Chuckles)* It's just part of the show, but they *are* ugly. I mean, you know, my band is ugly.

Another favorite of mine is [illegible] of your standards. How did you come to write "A Thing Called Love?"

I wrote it after a news broadcast. I got so fed up with all the rapings, the muggings, and the killings, and the shootings. If it ain't ugly, they don't put it on the news. You never hear anything good about what people are doing because they want to sell the newscast, you know. So, I just grabbed my guitar and said, "They don't never say anything about [illegible] Thing Called Love. You never hear them talk about that." I had the thing written in no time at all. It was just one of those things that came out of the sky, Ken.

Is that your personal anthem?

No, but it's the most recorded song I've ever written though. Oh yeah, that thing's working on over two million now. I don't know, but everybody recorded it. Elvis recorded it. Cash recorded it *(#2, c&w, 1972)*. Jimmy Dean recorded it *(#21, 1968)*. Everybody recorded the thing. It never was [illegible] big hit, it just turned into a standard. But my national anthem is "East Bound and Down" *(#2 c&w, 1977)*.

Buck Owens used to say that too much exposure on TV hurt his career.

Well, it happened to Glen Campbell too.

Did the movies help or hinder your career in the long run?

Well, that's totally different than TV- you can't turn that off and on. And, once your face has been 70 feet tall on the screen, they don't forget you. *Smokey & The Bandit* will run the rest of your life. I guarantee you. Every town we go into they say, "Man, they just ran *Smokey & The Bandit* the other night." It's either 1, 2, or 3; they're never going to quit running that movie. It's just one of those legendary movies that's going to run forever because people love it.

My uncle wants to know, can you really drive an eighteen-wheeler?

You tell your uncle that I can get through the first five gears until I get into overdrive, then I have to hand it to somebody.

You and Burt Reynolds had such [illegible] natural chemistry on-screen. How did you two prepare for a scene together?

We didn't. We just got up, they turned on the camera and we just cut up. It was that simple.

Did you do a lot of ad-libbing?

Oh yeah. In the front of *Smokey and the Bandit*, when were down there in Texarkana, and we got on that front end loader? That's all just off the top of your head - when he throws me over them boxes. I'm trying to get him to learn how to drive that thing before he kills me. He loved to do that stuff, Burt did.

Burt had a very strong taste for country music, didn't he?

Well, he played football at Florida State. He's from Florida. He's just an ol' redneck that just happened to be in the movies. He loved Nashville. When we did *W.W. and the Dixie Dance Kings*, he just loved it here. Yeah - he's a southern boy.

Was it always your intention to be a movie actor?

Wanted to when I was a kid. One of my dreams. I've been very fortunate. God has been good to me.

How did you feel about how your movie career panned out? Did you get to do everything you wanted to do?

Yeah - I was very fortunate. I was in two huge movies. *Smokey & The Bandit* and *Waterboy*. I just thank god for the opportunity to have been in 'em. I really do, Ken, both of 'em were fun.

You worked with some naturally funny people in the movies. Burt is naturally funny. Robin Williams is naturally funny...

Oh my lord, I guess so.

So is Adam Sandler. Is there anything these guys have in common?

They're all very rich. *(Laughs)* I don't know what they have in common Ken, but money.

One final question. What should modern audiences know about your new live album?

That it's unbelievable. Just tell 'em: If they want to hear a good party - if they want to hear a good happening, where the audience was happening, the band was happening, and old man Reed was happening, they need to bend their ear with this. It's a fun listen, I'll tell you that.

My thanks to Martha Moore at So Much Moore Publicity for her help.

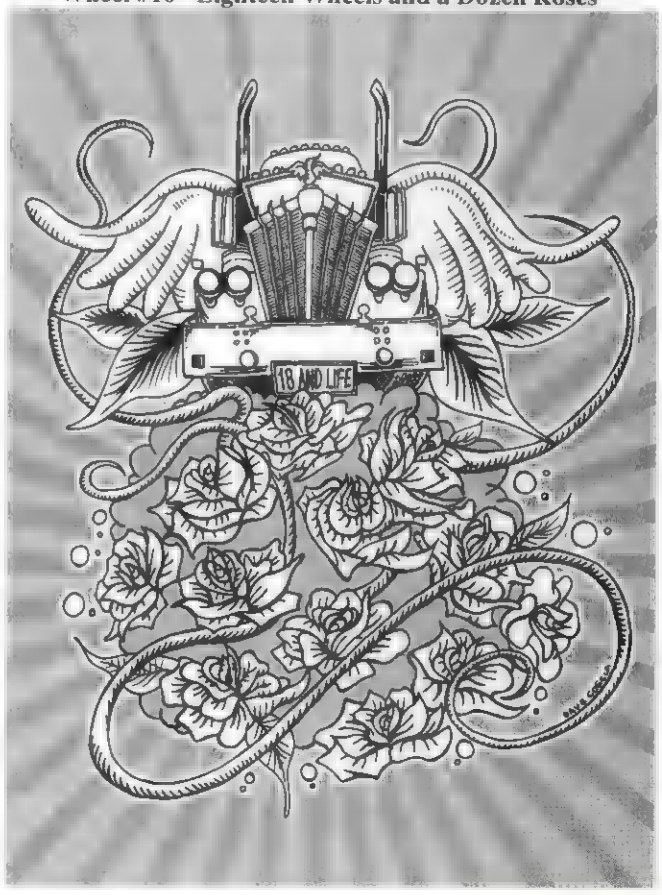
10 Jerry Reed Hits You Should Hear.

1.) Alabama Wild Man (#22 c&w, 1972)
2.) Tupelo Mississippi Flash (#15 c&w, 1967)
3.) Lord Mr. Ford (#1 c&w, 1973)
4.) Ko Ko Joe (#11 c&w; #51 pop, 1971)
5.) Another Puff (#27 c&w, 1972)
6.) Guitar Man (#53 c&w, 1967)
7.) Amos Moses (#16 c&w; #8 pop, 1970)
8.) When You're Hot You're Hot (#1 c&w; #9 pop; #6 AC, 1971)
9.) The Uptown Poker Club (#25 c&w, 1974)
10.) There's Better Things in Life (#20, 1969)

Addendum from Dr. Mark Hill: Just a note- the MCA *Smokey And The Bandit* soundtrack version of "East Bound And Down" has ADDED TRUCKER HORNS in the background. (In tune with the music!) My preferred version over the RCA single.

Spare Tire: "Point Me In The Direction Of Albuquerque" *– Partridge Family (1970) Speaking of horn sfx, Dr. Mark also recommends: One of the P-Fam's moodiest. Another girl hitchhiker, "lonely on the road" song. It has deep, bass trucker background horns. And she offers... "Anyone that helps me, is a real good friend of mine..." That could lead to some pretty dire circumstances for a young lady on the road! (Hill)*

Wheel #10 "Eighteen Wheels and a Dozen Roses"



Kathy Mattea (#1, 1988)
By Jake Austen/Illustration by Dave Coscia

Kathy Mattea's 1988 #1 hit is the greatest post classic era truckdriving song (coming eight years after the last of the true trucking songs made dents in the c&w consciousness), it is the greatest trucking song by ■ female singer, and it is the prettiest legitimate trucking song ever. The wonderful song is the tale of a trucker spending his last few minutes in the big rig, retirement gold watch in pocket, heading home to start the glorious new chapter of his life with his beloved wife. The fact that he's not giving up the road (they are getting a Winnebego) makes it more convincing that his vision of post-retirement paradise is no fantasy; this is ■ true romantic trucker, in contrast with the ladies men with gals in every town we've heard so many songs about. Though Mattea has had less chart success recently, her commitment to the working man has remained intact, as her recent, excellent coal miner CD proved. This is possibly the last truly great trucker song:

Eighteen wheels and a dozen roses
Ten more miles on his four day run
A few more songs on the all night radio
And he'll spend the rest if his life with the one that he loves

Spare Tire: "Rapp Dirty" *by Blowfly (1980) Speaking of 1980s trucker songs that break the mold, one of the first important rap records (off of the pottymouthed masked superhero's only charting LP) is a XXX-rated rap where Blowfly raps to all the no-good truckers (which conveniently rhymes with 'motherfuckers'). Using CB lingo Blowfly tells tales of dodging cops, masturbating in his truck's cab, picking up a tranny, pulling up to a bar in Alabama where he meets a redneck with a dick that was three times the size of his ("and that's not a big 104"), and driving his truck over a Klansman. (Jake Austen)*

Wheel #11 "Pinball Machine" by Lonnie Irving (#13, 1960)
STARDAY RECORDS By James Porter

From 1952 to 1973, Starday Records was almost the last stand of traditional country music. While the rest of Nashville let progress twist its' arm, softening its' sound for crossover appeal, Starday, for the most part, remained in the backwoods. Founded by Jack Starnes (the "Star") and Pappy Daily (the "-day"), the label hit pay dirt fairly quickly with first Arlie Duff and then George Jones ("The Crown Prince Of Country Music," as one album cover boasted). For the next 21 years, while the major labels' country divisions were trying to play down the "hayseed" image, Starday embraced it. Some of the rawest country, bluegrass, and rockabilly had the Starday logo on it, and they also made ■ name for themselves in the country gospel and country comedy fields as well. Lew Childre, Stringbean, Groovey Joe Poovey, Johnny Bond, Red Sovine, Minnie Pearl, the Willis Brothers, Rudy "Tutti" Grayzell, Cowboy Copas, T. Texas Tyler - all played a role in the Starday story. And, after the label was established, they had a rep for attracting faded hitmakers who were no longer on ■ major label, like George Morgan and Tommy Collins.

Under the direction of Don Pierce (who bought into the label in '53 and became label president, Starday also had ■ gift for marketing. One of these days, there needs to be a book of Starday cover art, just like there is for Blue Note. Graphics exploded in your face ("HIGH Authentic FIDELITY"), just about all the colors in the crayon box were used (none of that monochrome Folkways stuff!), they had atmosphere to burn (quite a few Starday covers were shot outdoors), and the large print they used could make the most obscure act in the stable look like the biggest star in the world. What Starday (and their sub-label Nashville) had the biggest knack for was thematically-arranged compilation albums. They weren't just content to shove 20 random artists on one album and give it a generic name like *Golden Country Chartbusters* or something (although they sometimes did that, too). Their anthologies usually revolved around some theme, where all the songs and artists had some relationship to each other. There were Starday/Nashville albums devoted to female country singers, songs about cheating, songs about God, fiddle players, guitarists (both regular and pedal steel), banjoists, even blues artists (Starday also acquired the masters to Hollywood, ■ '50s era R&B label that recorded the likes of Lowell Fulson and Charles Brown). And they weren't above cashing in on fads, either - Nashville once reissued a gang of aged country sides under the name of *The Country Side Of Bonnie & Clyde* (in '69...two years after the Bonnie & Clyde movie came out). And when the TV shows *Laugh-In* and *Hee-Haw* were pulling in the ratings, Starday/Nashville re-released old country and comedy masters on albums like *Country Music Laugh-Out* and *Gee From Haw*. At least once they were ahead of the trends...one of the very last Starday albums (on the Nashville subsidiary) was *Whole Lotta Shakin'*, which (finally!) compiled obscure rockabilly sides from the Starday and King vaults (by then, the two labels had merged together). This was years before any kind of rockabilly revival, and the theme was something like "songs that rocked the country," allowing them to target the country-rock market & the '50 s nostalgia craze simultaneously.

But the main reason that Starday is special to me is their truck-driver compilations. Country and trucks always went together like early rock & roll with hot rods. The geniuses at Starday knew this, and exploited it to the fullest, starting in 1963 with an album called "*Diesel Smoke, Dangerous Curves & Other Truck Driver Favorites*," featuring a classic cover of a lonely-looking waitress at a truck stop (who looks like Jackie Onassis in an apron), posing by a jukebox, overlooking the trucker who just pulled up outside. Dave Dudley's "Six Days On The Road" was a big crossover hit that year, so naturally that title appears in larger print than the other songs on the album (even if the version here was sung by Starday mainstay Red Sovine!). Other trucker-country songs on this LP included Bobby Sykes' "Long, Long Lonesome Road" (which is listed in the smallest print!), Tom O'Neal's "Blue Endless Highway," Benny Martin's "Radar Blues," and Hylo Brown's "Truck Driving Man." The concept obviously caught on like the flu, because the next year, the label put out "*Let's Hit The Road!!*" ("BY POPULAR DEMAND! MORE BIG HITS TO KEEP THE BIG RIGS ROLLING"). This time, there's ■ blonde on the cover with a *suitcase*, sitting in the lot of Trucker's Village ("GAS FOR LESS") and obviously ready to make tracks with the first asphalt cowboy who offers her ■ ride, like the guy seen talking to her. (In a cost-cutting move, another photo from the same session was later used in 1970 for the sleeve of *Truck Driver's Queen* on Nashville. Hey, even though the lady's fashions were out of date by then, she still looked good and it's a classic photo!)

This was the template that Starday followed for the next eight

years or so...in addition to keeping some fine authentic country music back in circulation, the covers did ■ lot to establish the image of the trucker as sex symbol. One right after another, the covers of these albums featured some lady happily climbing into the shotgun seat of some eighteen-wheel road hog, to the driver's approval. My own favorite, cover-wise, is 1970's *Haul Off & Love Me*, where some guy can't even make ■ phone call for those two truckstop groupies slobbering all over him outside of the phone booth! And they both evidently learned about makeup from Tammy Faye Bakker! (it should be mentioned that *Haul Off*, despite the word "haul," is not ■ truck-driver anthology - Don Pierce's liner notes explain that this is ■ collection of novelties. But, there is ■ truck visible in the background on the cover, so that's close enough...)

This was the market that Starday created, and they made a killing. Even though these albums were ostensibly "ABOUT THE GUYS THAT KEEP THE BIG RIGS ROLLIN' and THE GIRLS WHO WATCH FOR THEM" (as the blurb on the cover of *That's Truckdrivin'* read), not all of the songs used were truck-related. And over the course of six years, naturally some of the same songs kept popping up on these elpees, but that was half the appeal. By 1970, Starday rounded up some of the best-known (and most-compiled) truckstop songs and issued them on the unimaginatively-titled "*Best Of The Truck Driver Songs.*" The sexual innuendo was toned down on the cover. Instead of the usual photo featuring some miniskirted babe making bedroom eyes at some anonymous diesel daddy, we saw a lady alone, looking like *That Girl*-era Marlo Thomas in her flipped hairdo and mod blouse, giggling while playing with these Tonka toy trucks on the floor in front of her. This wasn't the last truck-themed album Starday would release, but the output did indeed slow down. They'd already exploited that field enough; an era was ending, so they decided to collect some of the better known trucker faves into one concise souvenir collection and call it ■ night. After this, Starday lived out its' last years releasing mainly bluegrass before going out of business in 1973. Thanks, Don, it's been ■ gas.

(Postscript: after taking a break for a year, Starday came back with ■ vengeance in 1975, now owned by the Gusto label. Concurrently, the national fad for CB radios was starting to take off, so Starday found itself in a "right place/right time" situation. Red Sovine was re-signed, and soon had a massive hit with "Teddy Bear," a tearjerker about a paraplegic, fatherless child who talks to truckers from his CB radio at home. Soon after, Gusto/Starday [which remains in business to this day] started issuing comps for a new generation of truckers, like *Super Slab Hits"* and "*How Fast Them Trucks Can Go!"* They're not very good, filled with latter-day remakes, cheesy versions of 70's country hits, and even the occasional non-country item like Bill Doggett's R&B classic "Honky Tonk," which is a great song, though, next to the Nashville Harmonica doing "Take Me Home, Country Roads," is slightly out of place. Maybe this was a shoutout to the black truckers on the highway?)

Of the classic repertoire of Starday truckstop sides, my big favorite is Lonnie Irving's "Pinball Machine," which was not a typical example of the highway-country sound. Irving was 28 years old when he recorded "Pinball Machine," yet he and the song itself sound much older. This is not the semi-rockabilly sound of songs like Dave Dudley's "Six Days On The Road" or Dick Curless' "Tombstone Every Mile," with the chunky Fender Telecaster riffs; this is traditional acoustic bluegrass in ¾ time, with guitar, banjo, fiddle, probably ■ stand-up bass, ■ faint pedal steel, and absolutely no drummer in the vicinity whatsoever. It starts out with ■ rapid-fire rap about some 70-year-old dude named John that Irving met in a truckstop (surprised?). After the singer buys the guy ■ cup of coffee and a slice of pie, he proceeds to tell his story, which Irving sings as if he were channeling Hank Williams' ghost...John had ■ wife and children, but during a four-month run, he feeds so much money into the pinball machines that he's too broke to send some money back home. John comes back to find his family gone, and his friend has to fill him in on what happened. And this is the part of the song that's killing me, right here...when the band stops cold and Irving tells us what became of John's loved ones: *"PNEUMONIA GOT YOUR BABIES & YOUR WIFE TOOK HER LIFE!"*

It ain't over yet. While speaking to Irving in the present day, the guy falls dead telling the story.

And even worse: in the real world, Irving himself died prematurely, just ■ few random months after this song came out. And he wasn't even thirty, yet.

This, my friends, is what keeps ■ lot of us coming back to good country music: the stories, man, the stories. Starday and then Gusto reissued and re-re-re-reissued this on several anthologies, including *"Best Of The Truck Driver Songs,"* which is still in print on CD. In that original early-seventies cover, with the flip-haired woman playing with the toy trucks. The ownership and formats may have changed, but the sounds Starday laid down still speak the naked truth, whether you're driving ■ truck listening to the 8-track or walking down the street hearing it thru ■■ iPod. Amen.

SPARE TIRE: "Rig Rock Jukebox: A Collection of DIESEL ONLY Records" *(1992 Diesel Only, licensed to First Warning Records, distributed by BMG). Speaking of trucker compilations...Fun truckin' tunes, calling itself, "Rig Rock." "Targeted at the truck stops and jukeboxes across America." "You'll find more country music these days on the lower east side of NY than Nashville." My favorites were: World Famous Blue Jays- "Good Morning Mr. Trucker", Go To Blazes-"Why I Drink", The Blue Chieftans- Punk Rockin' Honky Tonk Girl" "All selections also available on vinyl singles!" (Dr. Mark)*

Wheel #12 "I'm A Truck" by Red Simpson (#4, 1971)

by Jake Austen. Illustrations by Marco Jimenez and Johnny Sampson

Though Red Simpson never drove anything bigger than an ice cream truck, the Bakersfield minstrel is considered one of the greatest truckdriving singers and writers of all time. Starting with "Roll, Truck, Roll" in 1966 (written by Collins Kids alum Tommy Collins) Simpson recorded numerous serious and

novelty truck songs, all the while penning brilliant tunes for artists like Buck Owens and Merle Haggard. His 1967's "Truck Driving Fool" LP contained tunes like "Born to be a Trucker," "Sleeper, Five-By-Two," and "Black Smoke A Blown Over 18 Wheels." Other trucking songs he's recorded over the years include "Truck Driver's Heaven" (#92, 1976), "The Highway Patrol" (#39, 1966), "Country Western Truck-Drivin' Singer," (#62, 1972), "Awful Lot to Learn About Truck Drivin'," (#63, 1973), "Nitro Express," "Truck Driver Man and Wife," Truckin' Trees for Christmas," and "The Flying Saucer Man and the Trucker." In the nineties he recorded more truckin' tunes with Junior Brown, and in the 21st century he still gigs in Bakersfield and has a legit Myspace page. But even if he'd disappeared 35 years ago he'd be a legend, because that was the year he recorded a true trucking classic. "I'm A Truck" was a 1971 novelty tune penned by an amateur songwriter (a mailman named Bob Staunton). It seems that the gimmick of singing a song from the perspective of a truck should be hokey, and should be briefly funny but quickly annoying, like a Dickie Goodman cut-in record. But Simpson sells the song so well, and the production is so great, that it emerged as a timeless classic that one should never take a road trip without it in the tapedeck. "Hello...I'm a truck," a deep voice declares, and then the meta-tune reflects on all the previous songs about truck drivers, and how they don't tell the whole story. "There'd be no truck drivers if it wasn't for us trucks, no double-clutching, gear-jamming, coffee-drinking nuts. They drive their way to glory and they have all the luck. They'd be no truck drivers if it wasn't for us trucks. From there the truck becomes a diesel-driven Don Rickles, doing insult comedy aimed at his driver; he got passed by a VW bus full of hippies, he always blames the truck when he drives too slow, he's a bad tipper, and worst of all (a jab at Simpson's Bakersfield collaborator) he plays his Buck Owens tape too much. The worst crime his driver is guilty of is parking our hero next to a stinking cattle truck, when he could have pulled up to a pink Mack truck with pretty mudflaps. "And talk about stacked, they're both chromed!" Considering some of the two-dimensional caricatures that star in some trucking songs, and the hard-to-swallow allegorical icons in Sovine's classics, Simpson's truck stands as one of the most human characters in the genre.

Spare Tire: "Roll Truck Roll" *by Red Simpson (#38, 1966) There's a lot of messed up little kids in truckdriving songs, but for some reason, the tyke that breaks my heart the most is Little Danny in this tune. He's not doing too good at school and "the teacher says he just sits at his desk and draws pictures of trucks." Ouch. (Jake Austen)*

Wheel #13 "Soul Dog Pt. 1" by Soul Dog (R&B #65, 1976) "Soul Dog" is a funky CB-novelty song using Blaxploitation soundtrack wah wah and sassy soul sister backup vocals to tell the tale of b-a-a-a-d black trucker who is doing 95 miles an hour through the South, where a redneck highway patrolman (who keeps calling Soul Dog "boy") is outfoxed by the speedy trucker Soul Dog eventually gets up to 250 miles an hour, and his woman is near orgasmic as she urges him to "whip it, Soul Dog, bring it on home." "Soul Dog" was portrayed by Sweet Charles Sherrell, best known for playing bass (and some keys) for James Brown from 1968 through the early 80s (he also co-wrote some songs including "Get Up Offa That Thing"), and for his 1974 solo album on Brown's People label. Songwriter Willie Johnson composed the tune and Sherrell produced and did the vocals on what stands as the all-time funkiest CB record, good buddies.

Spare Tire: "Revolver" *by Hooverphonic w. truckers (1996) Sony Music. Trip Hop Trance group from Belgium. I heard this playing in a Camelot Music store in 1996, asked what it was and bought it. Dreamy instrumental and vocals over samples of CB truckers. "Breaker 1-Niner... Are there any Smokeys with ears on?" A strange combination that fits. (Dr. Mark Hill)*

Wheel #14 "Margo's Got the Cargo"
by Stompin' Tom Connors (1991)

(Illustration by Robert Dayton)

THE BEST GOLL-DARN SINGER YOU'VE NEVER HEARD COMES FROM THE SAME COUNTRY BRYAN ADAMS AND CELINE DION DID...REALLY!

"Yeah, right," I can somehow see you all sneering right about now: "What the hell good has ever come out of Canada?!!" Well, besides the (very early) Guess Who, SCTV, and of course *Roctober*'s own Human Serviette, there roams to this day across the Great Wide Northlands a man, a myth – dare I say, a LEGEND who has cast a long, black, yet somehow barely perceptible shadow over every guitar lasher who means a half hoot on *either* side of the dreaded U.S./Canada border. A man who possesses a wicked tongue, beaver-sharp mind, commanding right leg and, above all, a wit and wisdom before which few others dare even stand, let alone deserve to approach. That man, that myth, and/or that legend is named...

Stompin' Tom Connors.

WHO?

OK, look: He's written over 300 songs, his FORTY original (Canadian) albums have sold over three million copies, and his autobiographies soared high up the (Canadian) Best Sellers lists. He has been the subject of at least one Masters thesis, been awarded an honorary Doctorate of Laws degree, received a citation from Queen Elizabeth as well as the prestigious Order of Canada ...why, he even got married live on (Canadian) national television! But yes, chances are you most likely have never heard of, much less even *heard*, Stompin' Tom Connors. Probably because the man has not once performed outside of Canada, and has never had ■ single record released outside of Canada, throughout his tempestuous forty-some-odd-year career. Most ironically, this fervent, stubborn nationalism doesn't help Connors' own career up there one iota it seems, as he inexplicably has yet to place a solitary song on a Canadian country music chart ("They told me in 1964 I didn't fit the format. They told me that in 1974. In 1984, they told me that again," Tom says. "I guess the format hasn't changed that much"). That Stompin' Tom has not only survived, but actually *thrived* under such adverse conditions is a testament not only to the man's rig-load of talent, but his self-described, never-fail "to-it-and-at-it-iveness".

Born unto an unwed teen, raised in ■ orphanage, he began conjuring songs at eleven and spent his Wonder years on the run – and on the high seas (illegally working as an under-age merchant seaman). Once back on dry land, he indulged his Woody Guthrie fantasies and hitch-hiked the length and breadth of O Canada, guitar in hand, til in 1964 he surfaced at the mangy old Maple Leaf Hotel in Timmins, Ontario ...a nickel short of ■ forty-cent beer. Agreeing to sing for his alleged supper, Connors ended up on stage at the Maple Leaf for the next fourteen months straight (where ■ bartender nicknamed him "Stompin' Tom" after his habit of keeping time pounding one gigantic booted leg against the nearest floor). He cut his first DIY single the following year, signed to the ultra-indie Dominion label in 1969, formed his own label, Boot, two years after that, starred in a cool low-budget movie and (Canadian) television series, and duly won a heap of Juno (Canadian Grammy) awards ...every one of which he eventually, defiantly returned in protest of those damned, ingrateful, good-for-nothin' "border jumpers" (Canadian talent who forsake their homeland in favor of big American record deals and low-price BBQ). You see, Tom absolutely despises all those Canucks who head south with their songs and their stompin' boards, only to end up marrying biologically accommodating young girls from Queens: In fact, in the late Seventies he actually went on "strike" against the Canadian recording industry for not only allowing, but actually *encouraging* such unpatriotic practices, and so ornery was Tom over this sticky matter that his planned one-year "retirement" ended up lasting TEN.

Anyways, it was between '68 and '73 that the man released six albums which are today rightly considered the Holy Grail of Canadian Country: *ON TRAGEDY TRAIL*, *BUD THE SPUD*, *STOMPIN' TOM CONNORS MEETS BIG JOE MUFFERAW*, *MY STOMPIN' GROUNDS*, *STOMPIN' TOM AND THE HOCKEY SONG* and the landmark *TO IT AND AT IT*. Rich in character studies as vivid as those of Hank Williams', but etched as always with Connors' fierce sense of Canadiana, the classic tone poems which fill these records stand today as nothing less than national totems, part of the Canadian cultural lexicon ...yet still perversely receive nary a speck of airplay in BTO Land.

He finally ended his border-jump-protesting exile in 1989 (singing ■ tribute to his most high-profile prodigy, "Lady k.d. lang," by way of reintroduction), and Connors to this day continues touring and recording proud and unbowed, remains fiercely, stubbornly loyal to his beliefs and ideals ...and *still* hasn't had an album released outside of Canada. This should not for one second deter you, however, from seeking out any of his two dozen releases freshly available on shiny disc from Capitol/EMI Canada, and all produced by – who else? – Stompin' Tom Himself. To track these gems down, simply head straight on over to **www.stompintom.com**

Particularly recommended is 1991's *MORE OF THE STOMPIN' TOM PHENOMENON*, wherein our hero not only gives that real Canadian girl Rita MacNeil the full "Lady k.d." treatment but spins, in a mere three-minutes-some, the fragrantly delightful tale of a couple'a headstrong *Newfies* (that's native Newfoundlanders to all you livin' on the south side of the 49th parallel's pine curtain), ■ clock made out of cow manure, and a thousand-mile trip to The Big City in search of fame, fortune, and maybe even the Canadian dream.

Now the method of transport employed in said "Margo's Cargo" ditty may not be anywhere near as big-budget as in ■ Dave Dudley rig-rocker, but Margo's humble four-wheeler nevertheless does the trick, hauling both her and hapless hubby Reg, plus their very own four-legged manure maker, clear cross Eastern Canada – dodging ■ pesky Mountie near Montreal and even giving Stompin' Tom himself a lift in the process (see the video of it all right now on YouTube, I kid you not). All so that Margo may dump a big steaming load of bull crap outside the downtown Toronto office building wherein was manufactured Reggie's beloved "cowsy dungsy clock," you see.

Confused? Well, just try looking at it *this* way: Not since Studebacher Hoch covered himself in horseflies whilst battling Billy the Mountain has such a pungent piece of poetry struck so firmly to the ears and minds of those most adventurous connoisseurs of music and manure ...and all to the stompin' tune of a Connors creation every single inch the equal of "Bud The Spud," "The Ketchup Song," "Rubberhead," "Gumboot Cloggeroo" or even "Moon Man Newfie" to boot!

Need anyone say anymore then? Go grab yourselves a Stompin' Tom CD or three this minute, climb with it into your nearest eighteen- (if possible) wheeler, put both feet down whilst cranking everything all the way up and get To It AND At It once and for all, got it?

And if you happen to pass Margo *or* her cargo enroute, just keep the windows all the way up and Sing Along b'y, won't yez...

Have you heard the news in Newfoundland, rollin' around the Rock
How Reggie brought for Margie home a cowsy dungsy clock?
With Margie being a farm girl, she almost took a fit
To find the cowsy dungsy clock was really made of it.

The clock was from Toronto, and her mind was soon made up
She said to Reggie "Get the cow, and load her on the truck!
We're headin' for Ontario, and we're off to make 'er big."
Cause Margo's got the cargo, b'y, and Reggie's got the rig.

Reggie's got the rig, Reggie's got the rig,
Margo's got the cargo, b'y, and Reggie's got the rig.

Now they're rollin' through the Maritimes, the truck was nearly full
The cow began to ball, she was lonesome for the bull
The Mountie pulled them over: "Is there something I can do?"
"Go right ahead, sir" Margie said, "climb in the back and moo."

Now when they got to Montreal, they missed the Autoroute
But they found that everyone in town was glad to help them out.
"The sooner you hit Toronto," they said, "the sooner you'll make 'er big
'Cause Margo got the cargo b'y and Reggie's got the rig!"

Reggie's got the rig, Reggie's got the rig,
Margo's got the cargo, b'y, and Reggie's got the rig.

Now the truck was overflowin' when Toronto hit the rise
The 401 was full of dung and the cab was full of flies
"We're losin' lots of money Reg, we can't afford to stop.
We gotta find the place that makes the cowsy dungsy clock."

Well I wish you could'a been there, on the corner of Queen and Yonge
When Margo found the company and she dumped her load of dung
And when she found the office she was singin' and doin' a jig
Margo's got the cargo, b'ys, and Reggie's got the rig.

Reggie got the rig, Reggie got the rig,
Margo brought the cargo, b'ys, and Reggie brought the rig.

It was later in the evening when they heard from Mr. Judge:
"I don't know what to give yez, but I'll never hold a grudge.
I think a t'ousand dollars would be fair t' hand ya down
And thirty days of lodging will be free upon the town."

Now Margo says to Reggie, "What a hell of a dealwe've struck:
We might have lost a cow, b'y, but still we got the truck."
And now they're back in Newfoundland, they're loadin' up the pig
'Cause Margo got the cargo, b'y, and Reggie's got the rig.

Reggie's got the rig, Reggie's got the rig,
Margo's got the cargo, b'y, and Reggie's got the rig.
Margo's got the cargo, b'y, and Reggie's got the rig.

Spare Tire: "Theme From Big Ass Truck" *by Big Ass Truck(1996) A spectacular, one-hit wonder that I've only heard on this compilation, "Planet Music #6." Alternative-era, heavy metal, with a sense of whimsy. Crisp cymbals. Pink-Pong guitar. Raw vocals. You can just see a big Mack Truck barreling down the highway. Features a break that can only be described as, "the haunted ice cream truck acid flashback." Seek it! (Dr. Mark Hill)*

Wheel #15 "Convoy" by C.W. McCall (#1 pop; #1 c&w, 1976)

Convoy: A Fender Bender of a Trucker Movie

By Mike Faloon/C.W. McCall illustration by Johnny Sampson

Convoy is a feature-length movie based on a three-minute song. Any sober mind could recognize the potential flaws in such an idea. (For instance, what happens during the other 108 minutes of the movie?) At the very least, it should have wound up in the "so bad it's good" realm. Unfortunately, *Convoy* limps from oddball origins to painfully dull delivery bogged down by a skeletal plot, first draft dialogue, and vaguely motivated characters. *Convoy*'s cast and crew, many of whom had worked together in the past, probably had a great time making the movie but little of that fun made it to the screen.

In January 1976 "Convoy," the song, knocked the Bay City Rollers' "Saturday Night" from the top of the pop charts. The song was co-written and sung by jingle writer turned country singer C.W. McCall (a/k/a William Fries; Fries had created the trucker character McCall for TV commercials for a bread company, leading to his co-writing truck songs with Chip Davis, later of Manheim Steamroller). It tells the story of a truck driver named Rubber Duck who stands up to a cop and subsequently drives across the country. Word of mouth spreads and other truckers decide to follow him. The song's lyrics focus more on trucker lingo than telling a story but someone in Hollywood smelled a hit movie, nonetheless. The notion of transforming a song into a movie is saturated in everything I associate with Carter-era Hollywood, simultaneously a celebration of amazing

(and cynical) business acumen as well as a sign of cultural end times.

Convoy had no trouble attracting 70s icons despite its opportunistic origins. Rubber Duck was played by Kris Kristofferson, the only man who could star with Streisand one year (*A Star Is Born*, 1976) and Burt Reynolds the next (*Semi Tough*, 1977). Ali McGraw (known for *Love Story* and one of the greatest lines in the English language: "Being in love means never having to say you're sorry") played the love interest and Ernest Borgnine signed on as the dirty cop, Lyle Wallace.

The script was written by Bill Norton, an expert in the seldom-recognized sub-genre of "movies that deal with bad boys and music." He wrote *Cisco Pike* (1972), in which Kris Kristofferson plays a rock star turned drug dealer, as well as *Outlaw Blues* (1977), wherein ex-con Peter Fonda tracks down a country star who allegedly stole his song.

At this point *Convoy* was facing a draw between the forces of acting and writing. The deciding factor was the director. The movie needed someone who was stable and focused. They wound up with a down and out Sam Peckinpah.

Peckinpah had been polarizing critics ever since his breakthrough movie *The Wild Bunch* (1969). His movies were violent and misogynistic and critics and civilians alike were forever debating whether Peckinpah was examining those themes or merely engaging in cheap exploitation. History is proving kind to Peckinpah but during his lifetime he never knew a smooth period, a time when his movies drew well at the box office and elicited widespread critical support. By 1978 his career was in decline. His reputation was tarnished by years of drug abuse and repeated run-ins with studio executives looking to edit his films. He was desperate for a hit.

Convoy was unlikely fodder for a comeback. On the one hand, it would sink Peckinpah for years to come. (He didn't direct another movie until 1983.) On the other, *Convoy* would become the biggest box office success of Peckinpah's career (remember, this was the same American public swept up in Pet Rock fever), and there are those who consider it as one of the best movies of the 70s. They cite the stars. They love the lore. They don't talk much about the actual movie.

Before the cameras rolled Peckinpah altered Norton's script. The most significant revision was making Spider Mike, one of Rubber Duck's trucker allies, a black character, giving the story a race dimension that provided more substance than the conflict between truckers and cops.

Very little of note happened after that decision. The movie follows the basic gist outlined in the song: Rubber Duck scuffles with law enforcement officials, then he drives away. Many people follow him. These people drive tractor trailers and make great use of CB radios. The governor tries to join the party.

Early in the movie there are two glimmers that *Convoy* might redeem itself. In the second scene Dirty Lyle, the county sheriff, pulls over Rubber Duck and shakes him down over a speeding ticket. As the scene ends Rubber Duck says to Lyle, "There ain't many of us left." He's hinting at something, maybe taking the movie down the path of "the good guys and the bad guys aren't all that different." Peckinpah worked this idea to perfection in *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid*. But other than learning that Rubber Duck and Lyle haven't seen each other in six years, their past is never referred to again.

Ok, so Peckinpah opted not to explore big themes from past movies. It would have taken a lot of effort and further upset *Convoy*'s muddled mix of light-hearted fun ("We're good ol' boys!") and simple-minded approaches to real issues ("Kill the pigs!"). Self-parody, on the other hand—acknowledging Peckinpah's storied past *and* the sheer absurdity of *Convoy*—could have been a brilliant choice. There's a glimpse of such humor during the first fight scene. Peckinpah, known for using slow motion to heighten the impact of bloodshed, uses the effect when Spider Mike breaks a ketchup bottle over a cop's arm. It's like someone made him promise not to splatter any blood and Peckinpah responded by spraying condiments.

Given how many cast members worked with Peckinpah prior to *Convoy* they likely had a good time during the film's production. Peckinpah probably did, too. He spent a lot of time in his trailer and often left things in the hands of his second unit director, James Coburn, another Peckinpah alum. As for the audience the aforementioned glimmers and glimpses are all *Convoy* has to offer. The rest of the movie is a clumsy mix of awkward silences and unexplained events.

In most "so bad they're good" movies you can count on corny or clichéd dialogue, the hackneyed writing that fueled *Mystery Science Theatre 3000* for so many years. But in *Convoy*, more often than not, characters respond to big questions by simply not talking. It's like they were working from a rough draft of the script which often said something like "Note to self: figure out what this character is thinking then remember to write a really good line here."

As Rubber Duck leaves the gathering of truckers, thousands of them gather in the middle of the desert to show their support, one of his fellow truckers calls out, "You coming back, Duck?" Rubber Duck just walks away. Later, Lyle is on the radio with Rubber Duck, giving him one more chance to save himself. Lyle says, "Duck, did you hear me?" Rubber Duck puts on his sunglasses, puts his truck in gear, and drives on. It's too bad that *MAD* magazine's Al Jaffee wasn't on the set to contribute some snappy answers.

Next, the unexplained. Even a cursory viewing of *Convoy* leads to countless moments of confusion. *Convoy* isn't enjoyable but it is a special kind of "huh?" Here is a sample.

—Why does Dirty Wallace hate Rubber Duck so much? We know it's been awhile since their last encounter but we have no idea why he wants to get this trucker.

—Why does Melissa, Ali McGraw's character, fall in love with Rubber Duck? She's a photographer, successful enough to drive an expensive convertible. It's the 70s, she's supposed to be an independent lady. Yet she falls for a guy who does little more than set her up to get a speeding ticket and spend the rest of the movie barely giving her the time of day. In return, Melissa does little more than make moon eyes and, to remind us of her profession, make sure she's often seen with multiple cameras dangling around her neck.

—Why does Lyle—a country sheriff who said to Rubber Duck earlier in the movie, "You ought to be shot. If I had a gun, I'd do it myself."—suddenly have access to machine guns? Why not go all the way, give him powers that could thwart Rubber Duck, like laser vision or the ability to fly?

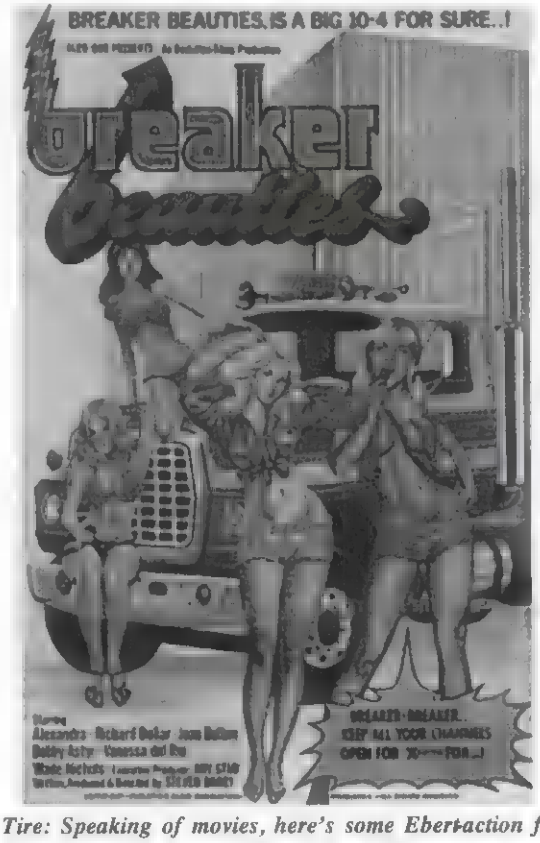
—Why do Rubber Duck and his good buddies use 18-wheelers to break Spider Mike out of jail? They literally drive through three or four stores before barging into the local lock up. I get that they're supposed to be like cowboys, that their trucks are like their horses, but I can't think of single western wherein a posse tried to ram their horses through the walls of the county jail. Back to the trucks: is there a slower, more cumbersome, less conspicuous getaway vehicle than an 18-wheeler?

—Why does Rubber Duck, an allegedly savvy trucker, continue hauling his cargo as he's making ■ beeline for the border? I don't want to go all Einstein here, but wouldn't pulling less stuff help him make better time?

—On that point, why do Rubber Duck and company think that crossing the state border will end their ordeal? They're on the hook for assaulting cops, destroying a squadron of police cars, and destroying a small town, not to mention the speeding and ham-fisted acting.

—Best of all, how on earth does the governor hear about Rubber Duck—should we believe that news of a renegade trucker can crisscross the state but no one can catch up with him and his entourage?—and why does an elected official seek the support of law breakin' truck driver? This angle gets better during Rubber Duck's funeral. The governor talks about how Rubber Duck was able to "dramatize ■ cause so vital to us all," though he neglects to offer any sense of what that cause is. In the same speech he promises to take said mystery cause to "Washington and present it to the Senate myself." Is it really that easy get face time with the United States Senate?

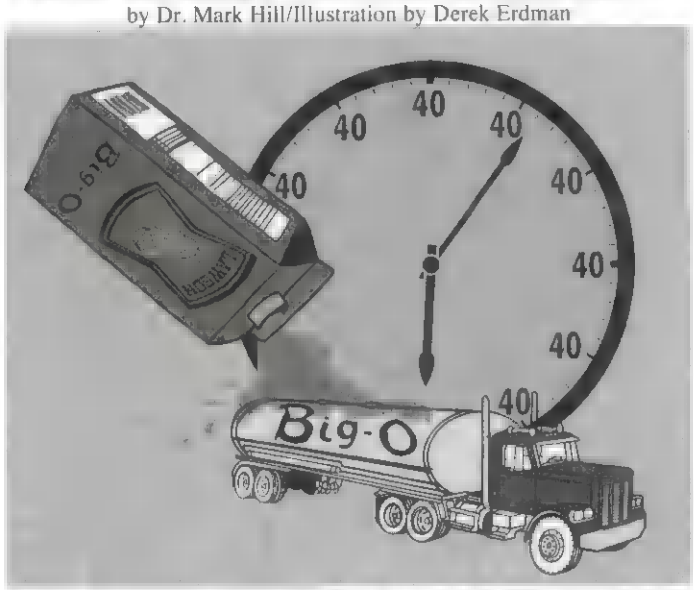
In less competent hands *Convoy* might have become the horrific multi-car pile up it so richly deserved to be, the kind of cinematic disaster that compels you to rubber neck. As it turned out, though, *Convoy* is a semi-weird roadside attraction that turns out to be a half hour further off the interstate than you expected—it has the potential to be fun to talk about but you're left wondering whether or not it was worth the effort.



Spare Tire: Speaking of movies, here's some Ebert-action from Dr. Mark Hill: BREAKER BEAUTIES *(1977) (XXX) Available from Alpha Blue video. A great piece of pop culture. Executive Producer "Roy Stud." Director of Photography "Prudence Prevails." The gist of this is that the truckers are so into trucking, they can't get it on with their wives and ladies unless the women "talk truck" to them. The locale is "Truckers Haven" run by "Big Mama" (played by "Kitty Suckerman.") I don't think there are many other XXX films of that era, dedicated to just one fad like this. There's plenty of trucker lingo, bell bottom jeans, shots of trucks going down the highway, picking up hitchhikers, etc. There's a subplot about a trucker radio station getting the "big story." "You gotta learn the truck drivers psyche... what turns him on... what makes him hot!" Several scenes with couples farking are intercut with the big truck posters and CB plaques from the walls of the bedroom: "CB Slanguage: Don't Feed The Bears" "That's a big 10-4, Put the pedal to the metal," etc. One trucker doesn't get exited until he discovers his girlfriend has top CB gear in her room. "Wow, an SSR-100!!" Jerry Ian Miller as "Johnny Rash," does terrible Bob Dylan and Johnny Cash impersonations. And a woman, "Linda Rontits," sings an airy Joni Mitchell-esque song. There are several good, unidentified country and soul songs played in the background. Then there's Bobby Astyr, "The guy who looks like Dennis Miller." He's ubiquitous in 70s-80s porn films. At the bar, a punk-rock looking guy swallows razor blades and pulls them out of his mouth on a string! In the climactic scene, a couple farks while she yells out entries to him from a CB LINGO book! The bonus XXX loops on the DVD have great rock guitar soundtracks. In one, we hear, "Out Of Limits" by THE MARKETTS and "Walk Don't Run" plus some Duane Eddy-ish tracks. And in the last one, "Telstar" and ■ good instrumental with a long drum solo. If they're not the originals, they're very close.*

Wheel #16 "Roll On, Big O" (c.1972) Artist and Release unknown

by Dr. Mark Hill/Illustration by Derek Erdman



Surely there were other CB/Trucker-related TV commercials. But this is the only one I can remember. I have researched this and have found no information on the artists and if it ever was released as a record. (Maybe a mail-in promo?) Or based on an actual song. This was a regional, commercial jingle in TV/radio ads for LAWSONS convenience stores. Possibly only in the Midwest. Especially popular in Cleveland, OHIO. The ads showed truck drivers delivering juice in a big tanker truck with Big-O" on it's side. Everyone knew the jingle line... "Rollll onnnnn... Big Oh-ooo!" Kids would call it out on the school playground. For some reason, this always reminded me of the LASSIE tv-theme from the same era. (perhaps the minor key and chorus?) The big trucker hit, C.W. McCALL's "Convoy", also originated from ■ series of regional TV jingle spots- for bread. The LAWSONS convenience store chain continues to this day... but only in JAPAN!

ROLL ON, BIG O

Roll on, Big O.
Get that juice up to Lawson's in 40 hours.

Well, the oranges ripen in the Florida sun.
Sweet on the tree they stay.
Then they pick 'em and they squeeze 'em
Just ■■ quick as you please.

And the Big O leaves the same day.
Roll on, Big O.
Get that juice up to Lawson's in 40 hours.

Well one man sleeps while the other man drives
On the nonstop Lawson's run.
And the sweet sweet juice in that tank truck caboose
Stays as fresh as the Florida sun.

Roll on, Big O.
Get that juice up to Lawson's in 40 hours.

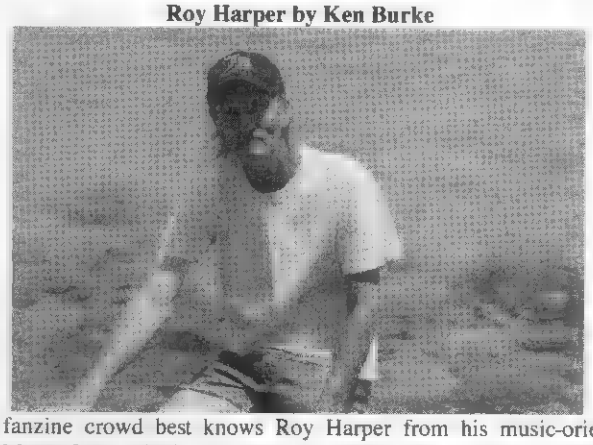
See and hear it here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7r6A6YQdtI

Spare Tire: "No Heavy Trucking" *by Kenneth Higney (1976) From his vanity pressing "Attic Demonstration." Most people would affix the word 'damage' to this album and it is that. It's a downer, he must have had to get alot of heavy emotions out to make this. It sounds attic, attic psych, all instruments must have been played and multitracked by him as they all move around each other like windshield wipers out of time, stalled on the side of the road on a late nite crawl, this for real New Jersey truck driver lisps and clenches, "No heavy trucking!" The way this feels, this could only be a song of experience. (Robert Dayton)*

For #17 & #18, plus bonus truckin' goodies, please flip the mag over and turn to the last three pages of the comics section.

Bonus Run: Interview with ■ Real Live Trucker

Roy Harper by Ken Burke



The fanzine crowd best knows Roy Harper from his music-oriented broadsheet *Outer Shell,* which was circulated free of charge to Florida record shops and via surface mail nationwide c. 1984-2001. (This writer got his start as ■ music writer with *OS* and regards Harper as his greatest pen-pal ever.) Residents of St. Petersburg, Florida might remember him as the weekend club DJ at Dave's Lounge. However, when he isn't collecting, writing about, or exposing people to new sounds, the New Jersey-born entrepreneur pays the bills by driving a truck.

Like the great purveyors of truck-driving music, Harper has always felt great empathy for the plight of his fellow drivers. Indeed, in the early 90s, he worked on an online trucker's newsletter, Florida Trucking, which helped his fellow drivers deal with many issues they faced on the road. Speaking from his home in St. Petersburg, Harper gave us his views on the realities of truck-driving versus the music-inspired fantasy.

Ken Burke: How long have you been a truck driver?

Roy Harper: I've been driving trucks since 1971, I started out driving a 'straight' body truck for a garment company in Neptune, New Jersey. I would go to the main warehouse in the garment district of New York City, pick up garments, and either take them to distribution centers in North Carolina, Pennsylvania, or back to the warehouse in New Jersey. I then worked for an electronic company in Michigan, and transferred materials to Ohio. It wasn't until 1979, that I started driving a tractor trailer. -- I was doing local work for a window/shutter company in St. Petersburg, Florida when I was asked if I would like to drive the 'semi' for the company. They were dissatisfied with their driver. I said "sure." It came naturally to me. This was the days before CDL licenses, and I transferred materials to California, Chicago, and Pennsylvania. I was with them for nearly ten years when Watkins Motor Lines came in and said they could ship the goods cheaper than the company having their own truck. So - I left. I worked, after that, for a sub-division of JB Hunt called Charger, Ploof Truck Lines in Tampa which is now Cypress Truck Lines, and Russo Trucking in St Pete. While I was at Russo, my wife became physically disabled from a spine disintegrating disease, and I took a job hauling materials for boat repair companies and marinas locally. I've been with them for six years now.

KB: What are CDL licenses?

RH: A CDL is a Commercial Driver's Licence. Each individual has to be tested and qualified for the classification of CDL of the type of truck they will drive. A CDL 'Class A' is for tractor-trailer driving. Should a driver want to handle hazardous materials, he must take ■ written 'Haz Mat' test and be classified as qualified to handle such material (I have a haz-mat endorsement). Bus drivers must have a special endorsement on their license, as well as tanker drivers, and truckers who haul double trailers. CDL's were made mandatory of truck drivers in the late 1980s. (Since I had already been driving trucks for over 15 years before the new law, I was 'grand-fathered' in and didn't have to take the tests required to maintain my license).

Why did you get into trucking?

Truck-driving always had an appeal to me, even as a kid. It was adventurous, and the feeling of being ■ free spirit. Working at a job where no one is looking over your shoulder, makes it an easier job to do.

What do you listen to while driving? Do truckers actually listen to trucker songs?

I really think there has always been a misconception of what the average truckdriver is listening to. Yes, country music is very popular with truckers, but a lot of the others listen to Classic Rock, or even Talk Radio. Personally, I listen to Talk Radio when I'm driving. I really think it keeps you more alert and awake than music. Plus, I like to be kept abreast on the news. A fellow driver, where I work now, listens to Sports Talk all day long in his truck.

What type of music do you listen to while you're driving?

When I used to drive cross-country, I would listen to songs that had 'drive' to them. To me, Led Zeppelin music always said to me - "Rock On. Drive On !"

Which truck driver song sounds to you like ■ came from ■ real driver's experience?

Perhaps "Six Days On The Road" best expresses the feelings of truckers as they work their way home. No matter how much you might be enjoying yourself out there, as the saying goes, "There's no place like home!"

What do people most often misunderstand about truck-drivers?

It is hard for the average person to even imagine what it's like to be a full time trucker. You drive til you're ready to drop, get to your destination, get a few hours sleep in the truck's bunk, and then get waken up by someone pounding on your door. You don't have time to do anything, but have your load ready to unload. A trucker's meals are in truckstops, and despite what the legends say - truckstops *aren't* the best places to eat! They are often over-priced, but the trucker has little choice because he has to go where trucks can park. Over the years, though, truckstops have modernized. Truckers can sit and view movies in a theatre atmosphere, take showers in private bathrooms, and even have cable TV piped into their own truck. Truckers used to get respect as being skilled drivers, that were also courteous & helping to others. That has changed over the years. Kids go into truck driving school, and come out 3 weeks later feeling they can conquer the highways and are better then anyone else on the road. The truth is that all those truck-driving ads on TV say how you're gonna make "big" money. Trucking companies that hire non-experienced drivers pay the least. In order for a 'new' driver to make an exceptional paying living he has to be on the road 365 days a years and live in his truck!

In your experience, what are truckers like ■■ a personal level?

It has always seemed to me that when I talk to truckers, they always have a better tale to tell than you have and they nearly have a 'die-hard' pride within themselves that says, "I know just a bit more than you." In that way, I nearly have to say that truckers are egotists.

What was your worst experience ■■ a trucker?

Probably the worst week of my life "over-the-road" was when I stayed in a truckstop in California confined in the cab of my truck with the flu. I once broke my leg in Clearwater, Florida while tightening down a load

on a flat-bed and the binder snapped into my leg. I didn't realize how bad it was until I got 100 miles up the road, and my leg was in so much pain I could no longer drive. I pulled into a truck stop, and typed in a message to dispatch, over my GPS computer, that I needed help and couldn't get out of my truck. I received a reply that I would have to call by phone! I laid in the truck bunk for nearly 4 hours before I saw another of our company trucks pull into the truck stop. I got him on the CB radio and he took me to the hospital. I ended up in a leg cast for 9 months! One thing that I've always found with fleet companies is that dispatchers could care less about how much drivers have already run in a day. They promise companies a delivery time without consideration of a driver's condition or stamina, let alone the legality of how many hours you are legally allowed to run. This totally turned me off to working for large companies, where you are a truck number, not a human.

What about women on the road?

Truck-stop hookers were always a pain in the ass! I'd be asleep in my truck, in the middle of the night and they would pound on the door wanting to know if you wanted a "good time." Probably the most unique hooker I ever saw was in a rest stop in Alabama. She walked back and forth with her poodle. It led others to believe she was just walking her dog, but she approached truckers with propositions of sex. I actually asked her about it, and she said she had yet to be 'busted." With all the temptation, I never engaged in any activity with a hooker. It just wasn't worth a disease that might kill you.

Did the companies you work for make allowances for conditions?

Very seldom. Another pain was when you'd be too tired to drive anymore and would pull off on a highway ramp to sleep. No sooner than you were asleep, a cop would wake you up and say that you can't park there! Sometimes, the weather would be so bad that you just couldn't drive safely. I once was in Indiana driving in a blinding snow/sleet storm. Like everyone else, I pulled off the road to wait it out. I called my dispatcher to make him aware of the conditions I was in. He didn't care, and said that my load *must* be on time. But, it was my life not his. No matter what - it comes down to your safety and the safety of others. Screw it if a lot was late! I never heard of a company going out of business because a trucker is a few hours late.

Dave Dudley used to sing, "I'm taking little white pills and my eyes are open wide." Did you or any other truckers that you knew take speed? What were the consequences of that type of drug use?

With the advent of CDL licenses in the 80s, most fleet companies (those with more than 5-6 trucks) made it mandatory to take a drug test as part of obtaining the CDL license. At the time I was driving for a flat bed company that had approx. 600 trucks. I saw drivers quit instead of taking a drug test because they would fail because of pot in their system. Most of these drivers were simply "weekend/at home" smokers of the herb, but that didn't matter. Companies did not want to take the chance that a pot smoking truck-driver would also do it while on the job. I had used all kinds of drugs as a teenager and into my early 20s. You know- It was the 'hip' thing to do! But, I grew out of it. In 1979, I was out with some friends from work on a Friday night, and a friend of mine offered me a 'white cross' - speed. The feeling was euphoric and lasted about 10 hours. You had control of yourself, and everything around you became much more crystal clear. You also felt as though you were racing against yourself when you walked or talked. The mind was taking you faster than your body was. For nearly 10 years, I drove once a month from St. Petersburg, Florida to El Monte, California. In between, I also usually made a couple runs to Chicago or Pennsylvania. It was on the California runs that I would take 'white crosses.' I would leave Florida on a Sunday morning and be in California Tuesday afternoon or night. All the way, I pretty much ran non-stop, and took a 'white cross' about every 10 hours. It actually was a highly enjoyable ride. Along I-10 in western Texas, there was nothing for 3 - 400 miles. You could rev 'er up to 80-90 miles per hour in the middle of the night, and the 'whole world' seemed wide open to you. Even at 90 mph, it was always amazing to me that cattle haulers would pass me by like I was standing still! There had to be the come-down though. By the time I reached where I was going in California, all the energy had been drained out of me. The mind actually signaled you to "crash!" There were times that I paid people to unload the truck because I simply was too exhausted to even walk. A good sleep of at least 10 hours was needed, and that was something you could not fight against at that point. It's been 20 years since I've used speed. Like a lot of drivers, I occasionally get computer selected for a random drug test. It's not a matter of your convenience. You have to go for a test the same day; no matter where you are at the time. Overall, I'm glad they do it now. It does make the roads safer. I have never met any drivers that actually admitted to using speed, but - it was highly prevalent before CDLs. You simply knew by the way a driver bragged about how he did a run so fast, that he had some 'help'!' Regulations in recent years have gotten much stricter about the amount of hours that you can drive without an 8-10 hour break. Of course, they will always be log 'fudging', but I'm actually glad to see the stricter regulations. It holds back dispatchers from saying, "You have to do this", or "You have to do that". Each driver knows his limits. It's not worth his life or the lives of others for the sake of on-time freight.

In the past you've told me about having a touchy stomach that necessitated abrupt bathroom stops. How did you deal with this when you were too far from a rest area?

Most people take for granted the modern conveniences that they have each day, but for a trucker it is quite different. The average person gets up in the morning, strolls to the kitchen to have coffee, and relaxes before starting his/her day. A trucker doesn't have that luxury. It's either being abruptly woken up by a pounding on the door by someone that is ready to unload you, or getting back behind the wheel and doing a couple stretches before driving down the road. But - Like everyone else, there ARE bodily functions that have their 'calling.' *(At this time, I warn readers to put down that pizza, or stop eating!)* There is usually no bathroom or 'facilities' in a truck. In 1984, I decided to myself that I had to make things more convenient for myself. It started on a rainy day in Pennsylvania. I was on a two-lane road, and "nature called." Luckily, I found a place to pull over and ran up a hill into the woods. I got soaking wet, but was relieved. From that day, I said to myself that I would never do that again. While I was relieved, I was soaking wet from the rain, cold, and not totally comfortable afterwards with the usage of leaves. So - I bought a "Port-A-Potti." It's a portable toilet meant for camping, has a tank for water so you can flush, and you add chemicals to stop any odors and to keep it sanitary. At the time, it cost about $100. I really think it's one of the best things ever invented. At those times when there wasn't a rest area for another 80 miles, it simply was a matter of pulling over, pulling across the curtains of your sleeper, and - do what you had to do. On jobs that I didn't have a sleeper cab, including present day, I have kept a 5 gallon pail on the floor in front of the passenger seat. It's not pretty, or as comfortable as a "Port-A-Potti," but - it's emergency usage sure beats the other 'consequences!' Over the years, I have heard about drivers peeing in a bottle, and throwing it out the window. I have always had a bit more 'couth' than that! If I was driving in a city region, and had a #1 to do, I would usually raise the hood, so I could hide myself. But, I did learn once that just pulling over and going to the other side of the truck, out of sight, wasn't enough of a safeguard.-- I had just gone thru a weigh station on I-75 before going into Georgia when I pulled over to the side of the ramp to pee. Just as I was done, I heard a siren next to me! It was a DOT [Department of Transportation] officer and the first thing he asked me was if my company would like it if I had to respond to a ticket for "public urination." Of course, I said "No sir." Instead of writing me a ticket, he made me use a pail and go back & forth, by walking, to the weigh station (about 200 feet back) and get pails of water to wash the "evidence" away.

You've had a rather unpleasant experiences with the Department of Transportation, haven't you?

Yes. You're pulling into a weigh station. You ease your truck up onto the scale, but the green light to proceed doesn't come on. Then, over a loud speaker, comes *THE* sentence that can cause worry, instant stress, and even an instant anxiety attack. "Driver, drive around back, park your truck, and wait for an officer." In other words, you are either overweight, or about to get a truck inspection. DOT officers, actually, have more power than state police. And, I have my own nickname for them - "Highway Nazis." It does not matter how well kept your truck is mechanically, or legal you are, a DOT officer can always find a reason to give you a ticket. And - you are more prone to get some kind of ticket

if the officer doesn't like your looks or attitude. I'm not making this up! This judgment comes from past experiences.

Tell us about some of those experiences.

I was driving in the 2nd over from the far left lane in California. I got a ticket for having ■ commercial vehicle in a non-commercial lane. When I told the officer that I saw no signs stating that I could not be driving there, I was told, "If you drive in California, you should know the laws." I was given a $100 fine that I went and paid that day. I had been told that if I did not pay the fine, my driving privileges in California would be revoked. In North Carolina, I was given a truck inspection, and told that a couple of my trailer brakes were slightly out of adjustment. No problem. I had a certification for brakes, and could do the repair myself in about 2 minutes. The DOT officer said that I had to have ■ certified mechanic do the repair before I could proceed. Funny - by coincidence, there was one right there in the back of the weigh station site, who could do the repair and bill my company. With a flat tire on an inside tire on a trailer, I was told by my company to drive the 200 miles in the direction I was going and get a new tire at ■ truckstop outside of Nashville, TN. The truckstop was called ahead of time and had the tire size I needed and would have it ready. A 1/4 mile before the truckstop, there was ■ weigh station. DOT would not let me go the additional 1/4 mile without getting the new tire. I had to wait five hours before a truckstop road service truck could come to me. Transferring a straight-body truck from Florida to New Jersey, I stopped the first night at ■ motel on the FL/GA border. I bought a six pack of beer and drank three of them in the motel room. Rather than throw the rest out, I put the rest under the passenger seat and proceeded on the next morning. Outside of Nashville, TN (the same scale), I was given a truck inspection, and given a $500 fine for having alcohol in a commercial vehicle; payable on-the-spot. The truck was also put 'out-of-service' for 24 hours. By law, I was supposed to go to the nearest lodging where I could park a truck. The nearest truckstop was 1/2 mile away. Instead, the DOT officer told me that I was to go to a truckstop five miles further down the road and stay there. He specifically stated that I would have a 'good time' there and there were good hookers there!

How did that get resolved?

I filed a formal complaint with the state of Tennessee over this, which went all the way to the governor's office. While I still had to pay the ticket, the officer was investigated for unacceptable conduct.

You've told me before that a lot of DOT officers can act pretty high handed at times.

Oh yes. For example, being only 700 pounds overweight on a Sunday night in West Virginia, I was taken by a DOT officer to a courthouse to pay the fine that night. I was told it had to be paid immediately or I would be jailed. These days, I haul hazardous materials. With having to have placards stating so on the truck, I'm a 'bull's eye' for any cruising DOTs. It's an excuse to pull me over and 'check' me out. The company I work for is one of the most highly rated companies in Florida for safety records and not having violations. And yet, I've had my share of DOT encounters with my current job too. Cape Coral, Florida - I accidentally forget to remove a placard on one side of the truck when I was no longer "hazardous." I was pulled over by DOT and given a $500 fine. I argued with the officer that I made a simple mistake and should be given a break, especially of me having a good driving record. He said he was giving me a break by not taking me to jail. This was not a jailable offense, and I didn't pursue my argument any further, although I was saying a whole bunch of expletives under my breath!

Are truckers particularly susceptible to scams by law enforcement and local businesses?

You hear about scams happening to truckers all the time, and I've even heard of drivers getting robbed while in ■ truckstop pumping fuel into their trucks. In Alabama, I once got caught up in a 'big' scam. I pulled into a small truckstop off the Interstate to get a soda and clean the bugs off of my windshield. I had a delivery the next morning at ■ place 10 miles down the road off the interstate. While on the fuel island cleaning my windshield, a girl came out from inside the station and made 'chit-chat' with me. Then, I went down the road, parked & slept at my delivery location, delivered in the morning, and left. I went back to the same station, which also had an Arby's next door, and had to wait for ■ call from my dispatcher to await my next assignment. As I was parked there, police showed up and stated that I had stolen fuel there the night before, and the girl in attendance was a witness to it. She stated that I 'roared' out of the station after I stole fuel. (Hard to do with a 40,000 lb load !!) I stated to the police that if I had stolen fuel the night before that I certainly wouldn't have shown up again the next morning! Plus, they could check my fuel tanks and match it up with my fuel records. I certainly had no reason to steal fuel since the company paid for my fuel. The police let me go. Two weeks later, I received a subpoena to appear in court for the theft of fuel! Since the court papers stated it was for under $200, it would not be a felony. I hired a lawyer for nearly $2000 and intended on fighting it in court. It was the principle of it. I had been scammed and I was going to prove myself innocent! The owner of the fuel stop' agreed that If I paid for the fuel lost, he would drop any charges. My lawyer told me that I could fight it, but it would probably cost me up to $10,000 to take it to a higher court. In court, I paid for the fuel that obviously the cashier had claimed was purchased, but was put into somebody else's tank and I was the scapegoat for someone else's free fuel. Obviously - some kind of scam between the cashier and someone she knew. To be honest, I hope 'that' girl is now in jail. I have to assume that I wasn't the only one she ever pulled a scam on. Overall, you really can't take anything for granted. Every trucker needs to protect himself and beware of situations not in his/her favor. It's not an occupation where you should ever let your guard down.

Are truck drivers the modern day cowboy?

The days where a trucker was considered a 'Modern Day Cowboy' are gone. The days of a 'trucker' being a "special breed" are gone. Day after day, I ■■ truckdrivers that are just as careless and 'non-caring' towards other drivers as everyone else on the road. It's almost ■ "Dog Eat Dog" attitude on the highways. One of the highlights of my driving career was driving thru El Centro, CA, on a waving two lane and hearing Huey Lewis & The News' "Heart Of Rock & Roll" for the first time. Man, did it rock! I 'hammered down' to about 80 mph and felt that the world was mine! I really feel fortunate that I got to see a lot of the country while making a living doing it. My last experience on the PA Turnpike was very enjoyable too. It brought back memories of going to Grandma's house from Jersey to western PA when I was a kid. Driving to Key West, was always a beautiful drive, even if it seemed to take forever on the two lane to the end.

Would you do it ■■ again?

These days, I'm glad to have what I consider a "normal life." I work 8-10 hours a day, and am home all weekend. I have no regrets over my 'over-the-road' truckdriving years, but am also glad that they are over. It's a hard life, and can take a toll on you physically & emotionally. I certainly wouldn't recommend it to anyone married, or having ■ family. It certainly is for a special breed of person!

You can reach Roy Harper via e-mail at Outershel@aol.com.

Roy Harper: Certainly, the songs I consider to be the best songs to drive by won't be a general consensus by other drivers, but these are my Top 10.

1) "The Heart Of Rock & Roll" Huey Lewis & The News
2) "Life Is A Highway" Tom Cochrane
3) "Down The Road Apiece" Rolling Stones version
4) "Born To Run" Bruce Springsteen
5) "Crosstown Traffic" Jimi Hendrix
6) "Whole Lotta Love" Led Zeppelin
7) "Pearl Necklace" ZZ Top
8) "Stranglehold" Ted Nugent
9) "I Ran" Flock Of Seagulls
10) "Sunrise Over Jamul" Jamul

And while we are making lists...Ken Burke's Favorite Trucker Songs

1.) "Girl on the Billboard," Del Reeves, (#1, 1965)
2.) "Truck Driving Son of a Gun," Dave Dudley, (#3, 1965)
3.) "Give Me 40 Acres (To Turn This Rig Around)," Willis Brothers (#9, 1964)
4.) "Roll On, Big Mama," Joe Stampley (#1, 1975)
5.) "Bonnie Jean (Little Sister)", David Lynn Jones, (#10, 1987)
6.) "Six Days on the Road," Dave Dudley (#1, 1963)
7.) "I'm a Truck," Red Simpson, (#4, 1971)
8.) "Looking at the World Through a Windshield," Del Reeves (#5, 1968)
9.) "Drivin' My Life Away," Eddie Rabbit, (#1, 1980)
10.)"Wolf Creek Pass," C.W. McCall, (#12, 1974)

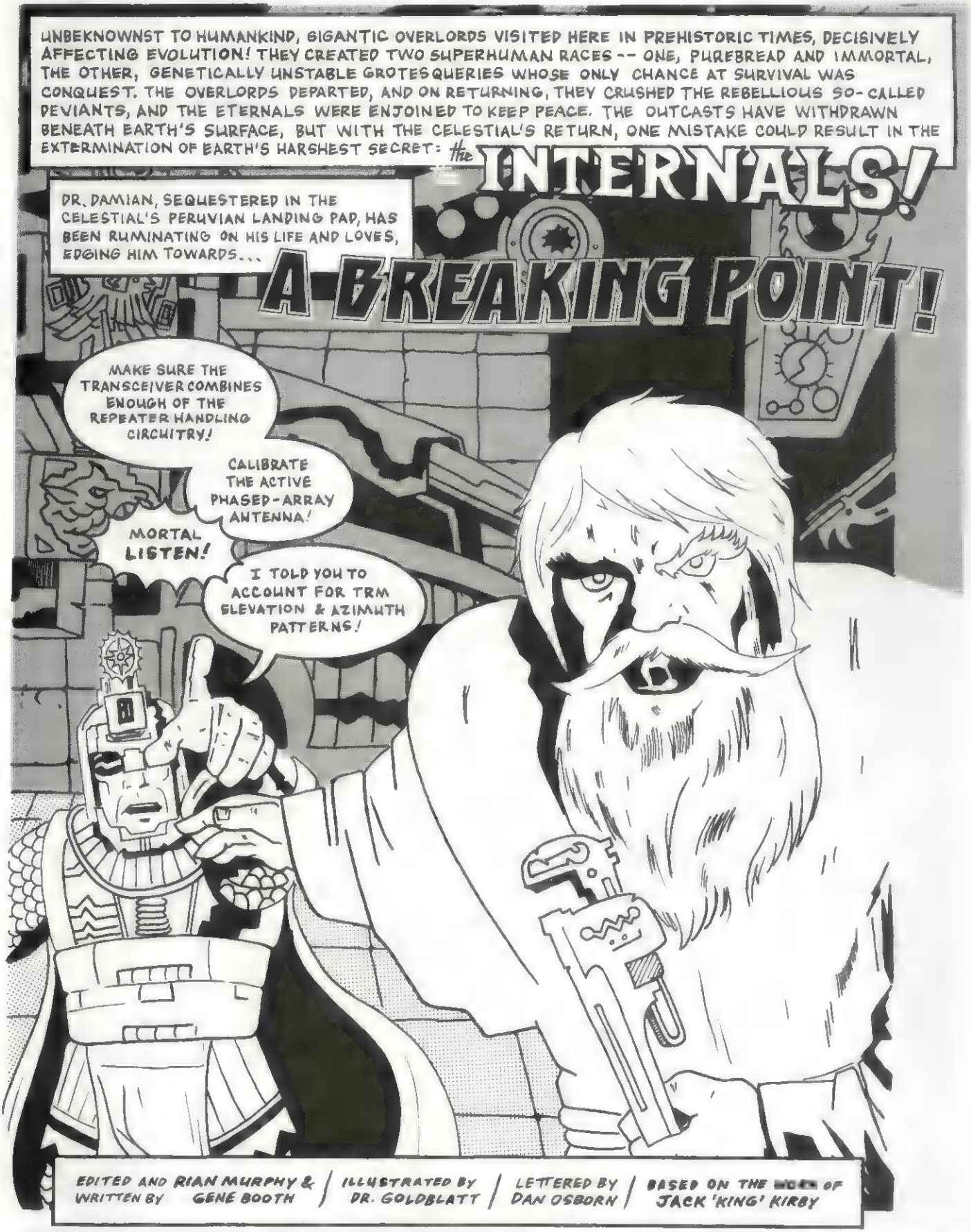
Doodle doo-doo-doo-oo, uh, Doodle-doot-doot. Doooo
Who is the girl wearing nothing but a towel in the picture on the billboard in the field near the big ol' HIGHWAY?!
Smile
... Del Reeves 1932-2007
HIGHWAY PATROL

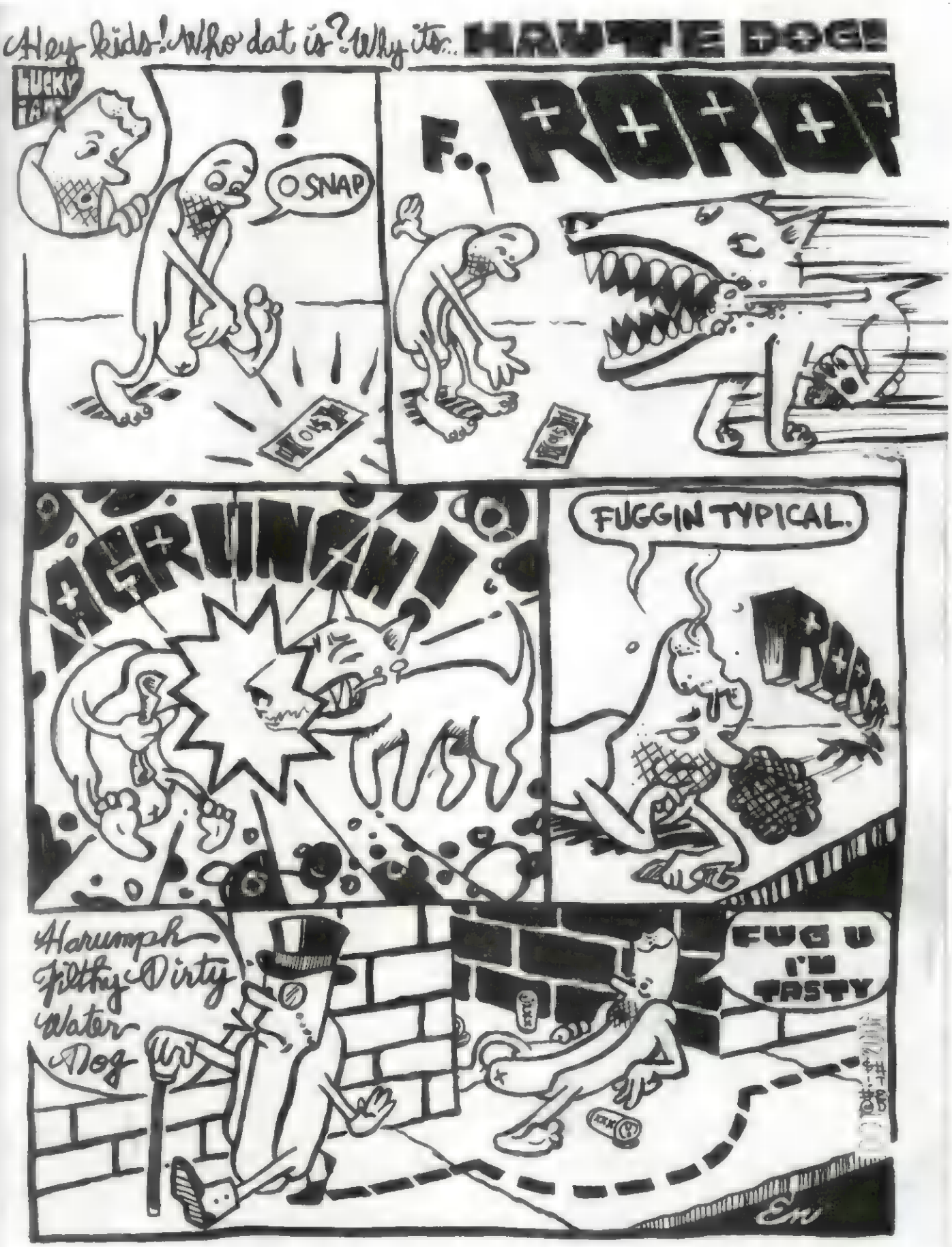
Wheel #18: "CB Savage" by Rod Hart. (#67 Pop: #23 C&W, 1977) by Jake Austen

Keep on Shuckin'
SHUCKA SHUCKA SHUCKA
BY JOHNNY SAMPSON
SHUCKA SHUCKA SHUCKA
SHUCKA SHUCKA SHUCKA
SHUCKA SHUCKA SHUCKA
SHUCKA SHUCKA SHUCKA
SHUCKA SHUCKA SHUCKA
RONK RONK
SHUCKA SHUCKA SHUCKA
SHUCKA SHUCKA SHUCKA
SHUCKA SHUCKA SHUCKA
SHUCKA SHUCKA SHUCKA
SHUCKA SHUCKA SHUCKA

I TRUST THE PREPARATIONGS ARE COMPLETE, DR. DAMIAN.
JUST CENTERING THE TRANSMISSION GRATING A FINAL TIME...
THAT IS WELL, FOR OUR TASK IS MOST URGENT--HOLD!
A MESSAGE FROM THE CELESTIALS, WHICH MUST BE INTERPRETED WITHOUT DELAY!
I...I...
IMPOSSIBLE! A PENETRATION ALERT!
A DEVIANT HAS SOMEHOW BROKEN THROUGH THE INVISIBLO FORCE FENCE!
NEXT ISH: DESTROY YOUR NOTION OF CIRCULAR TIME! DON'T YOU DARE MISS IT!

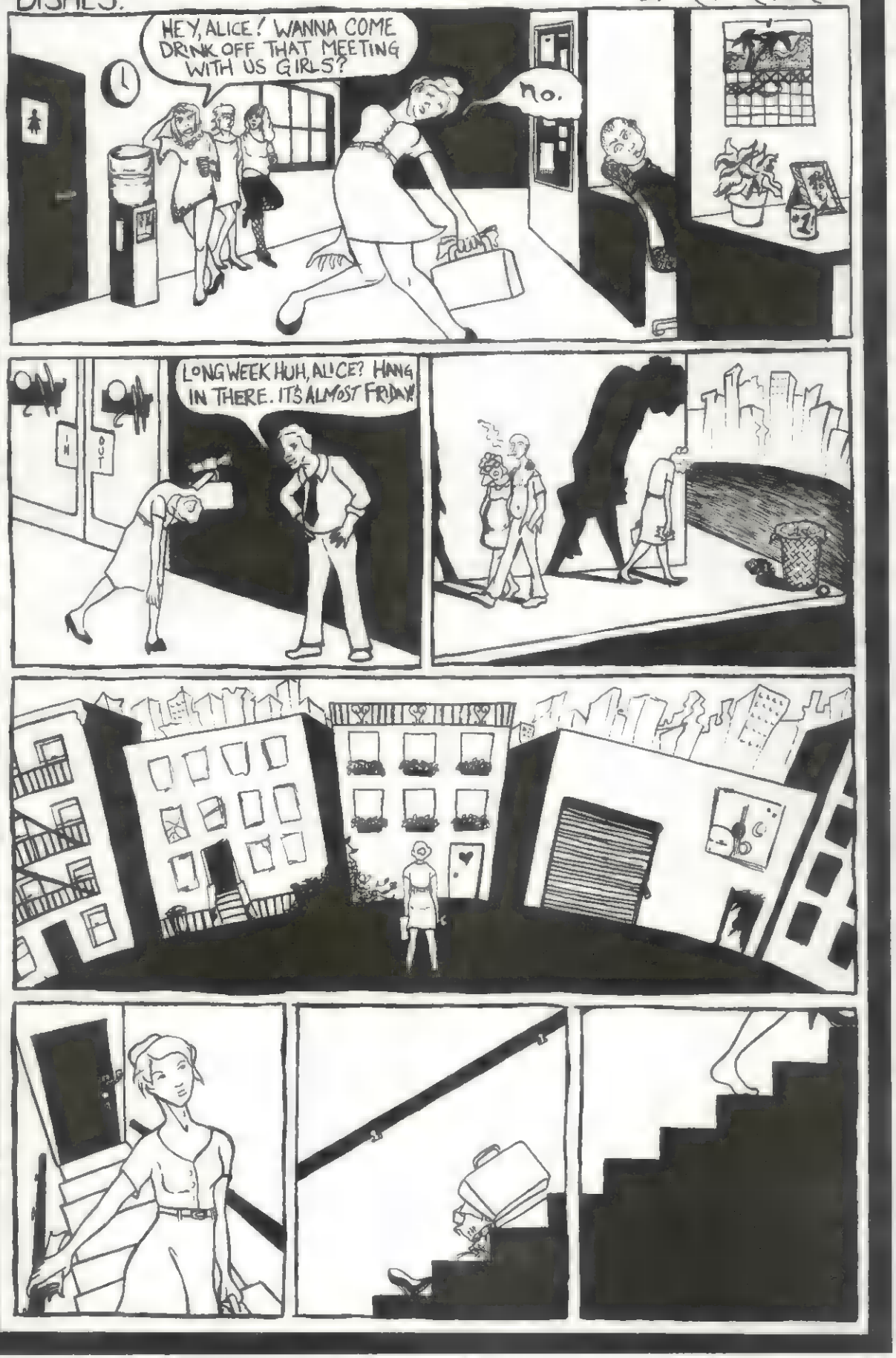
CAREFUL WITH THAT TRANSPONDER, DAMIAN!
OH, IT WAS A TRANSPONDER, ETERNAL --
KLAWK!
BUT NOW, AS I DIFFRACT CHARACTERISTICS ACROSS THE FIRST 3" OF THE DEVICE'S LSF*
* LINE SPREAD FUNCTION -- EGGHEAD ED.
YES! IT CAN NOW POWER A TRANSPORTER -- A FUNCTIONING DNA DESTABILIZER/RECONSTITUTOR!
AH, IT IS READY. NOW WITH THESE COBALT GLOVES, TO TRANSFER THE ORBANEUM,
MY FAITH IN THE ETERNALS' PROJECT WEAKENS DAILY. AS LITTLE AS I LIKE DECEIVING AJAK, THIS MAY BE MY ONLY --
HUMAN -- I NEED YOU!
THE ONE CALLED SARAH SAID YOU WOULD HELP.
YOU HAVE THREE MICRONOMES TO DECIDE...


UNBEKNOWNST TO HUMANKIND, GIGANTIC OVERLORDS VISITED HERE IN PREHISTORIC TIMES, DECISIVELY AFFECTING EVOLUTION! THEY CREATED TWO SUPERHUMAN RACES -- ONE, PUREBREAD AND IMMORTAL, THE OTHER, GENETICALLY UNSTABLE GROTESQUERIES WHOSE ONLY CHANCE AT SURVIVAL WAS CONQUEST. THE OVERLORDS DEPARTED, AND ON RETURNING, THEY CRUSHED THE REBELLIOUS SO-CALLED DEVIANTS, AND THE ETERNALS WERE ENJOINED TO KEEP PEACE. THE OUTCASTS HAVE WITHDRAWN BENEATH EARTH'S SURFACE, BUT WITH THE CELESTIAL'S RETURN, ONE MISTAKE COULD RESULT IN THE EXTERMINATION OF EARTH'S HARSHEST SECRET: the INTERNALS!
DR. DAMIAN, SEQUESTERED IN THE CELESTIAL'S PERUVIAN LANDING PAD, HAS BEEN RUMINATING ON HIS LIFE AND LOVES, EDGING HIM TOWARDS...
A-BREAKING POINT!
MAKE SURE THE TRANSCEIVER COMBINES ENOUGH OF THE REPEATER HANDLING CIRCUITRY!
CALIBRATE THE ACTIVE PHASED-ARRAY ANTENNA!
MORTAL LISTEN!
I TOLD YOU TO ACCOUNT FOR TRM ELEVATION & AZIMUTH PATTERNS!
EDITED AND WRITTEN BY RIAN MURPHY & GENE BOOTH
ILLUSTRATED BY DR. GOLDBLATT
LETTERED BY DAN OSBORN
BASED ON THE [redacted] OF JACK 'KING' KIRBY

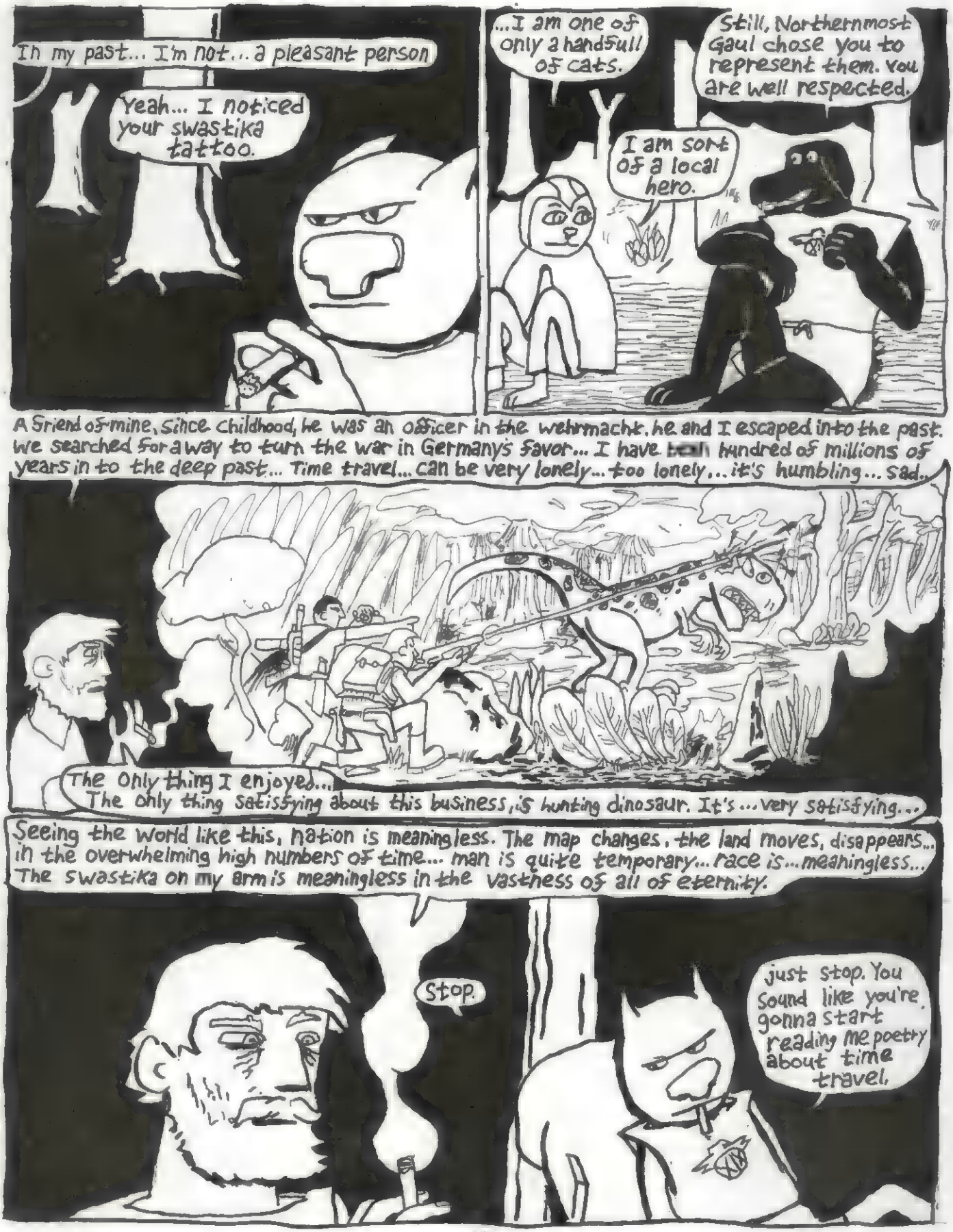

Hey kids! Who dat is? Why its... HAUTE DOG!
LUCKY IAN
!
O SNAP
F.. ROROP
AGRUNGH!
FUGGIN TYPICAL.
ROROP
Harumph Filthy Dirty Water Dog
FUG U I'M TASTY

DISHES.

BY KAT ROBERTS

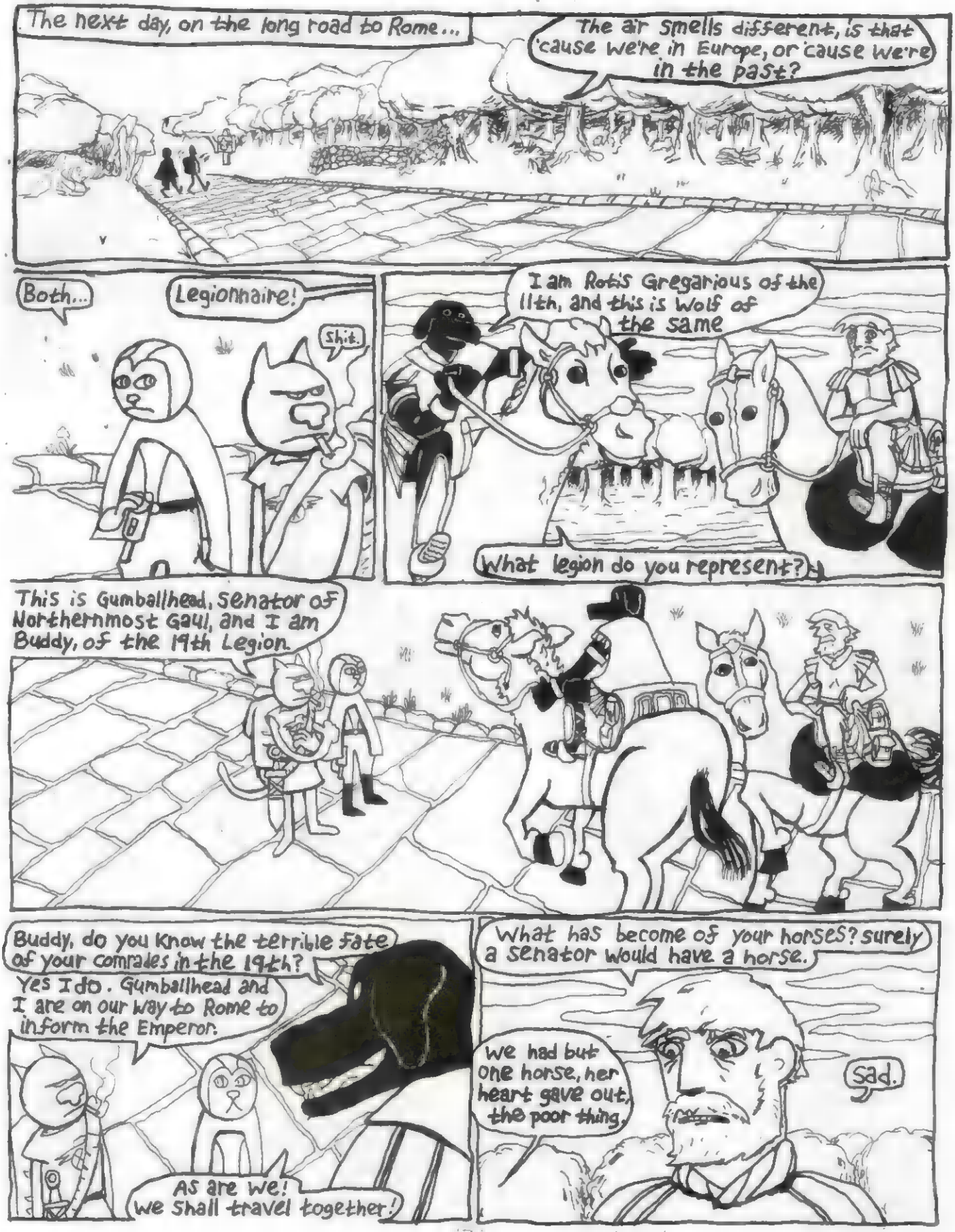


Why did you two switch names, is that some kind of cat custom?
Cats don't have customs. That other cat, he doesn't know that I'm Gumballhead too.
I see... Time travel problems.
yep.
The other Gumballhead, he's gonna kill me, or you, or Rotis, or the Emperor of Rome, or someone.
All I know is, his mission can't be good for me. I gotta find out what he's up to.
He needs to change some part of history...
As long as he's alive, I'm in danger.
Have you changed history?
I don't know. Time is... Very... malleable, you see.
The only change I've seen for certain...
There were no talking animals when I began
hmm.
What's the story with Rotis, Gregarious?
Rotis? He's a good man, a favorite of the Legions, and the Emperors Smiling Spy.
...a loyal Roman. a hero.
The smiling dog hero of Rome.
He likes you, you're a legionnaire in his eyes. A brother.
I'll keep an eye on the other Gumballhead for you.
Because, soon, we'll be in Rome.
and the real trouble always starts in Rome.
NEXT: The BEARERS of Bad NEWS!


In my past... I'm not... a pleasant person
Yeah... I noticed your swastika tattoo.
...I am one of only a handfull of cats.
Still, Northernmost Gaul chose you to represent them. You are well respected.
I am sort of a local hero.
A friend of mine, since childhood, he was an officer in the wehrmacht. he and I escaped into the past. we searched for a way to turn the war in Germany's favor... I have been hundred of millions of years in to the deep past... Time travel... can be very lonely... too lonely... it's humbling... sad.
The only thing I enjoyed... The only thing satisfying about this business, is hunting dinosaur. It's... very satisfying...
Seeing the world like this, nation is meaningless. The map changes, the land moves, disappears... in the overwhelming high numbers of time... man is quite temporary... race is... meaningless... The swastika on my arm is meaningless in the vastness of all of eternity.
Stop.
just stop. You sound like you're gonna start reading me poetry about time travel.

What there is to smoke in Rome...
...it's simply terrible.
A long uneventfull day winds to a close as our friends set up camp...
Drink senator! Tell me of Northern most Gaul!
Are all the people there cats?
Could I ask you for another cigarette?
Sure... you have the vino, I have the smokes
Mmmmmmm... Thank you... ...Gumballhead.
Wols...
What the hell's goin' on here? Where are we... and... when?
Yes, you are in ancient Europe. You two aren't the only time travelers in Rome you know.
You and I have met before. In my past... in your future, and NOT on friendly terms.

Bad luck seems to plague the 19th
But, you are welcome to ride with us.
Yes
We'll change your luck.
Yeah, if we don't change yours first.
I'll deliver you safely to Rome senator.
You have my word.
Thank you Rotis, we appreciate the help.
I see you have cigarettes...
yup.
May I be so bold as to ask you for one?
Hey, you gave me a list, Knock yourself out.
Thank you, it's been a long time.
Shtich
Mmmmmm.... Smooth...
Such flavor, these cigarettes, they are American...
Yes?


The next day, on the long road to Rome...
The air smells different, is that 'cause we're in Europe, or 'cause we're in the past?
Both...
Legionnaire!
shit.
I am Rotis Gregarious of the 11th, and this is Wolf of the same
What legion do you represent?
This is Gumballhead, Senator of Northernmost Gaul, and I am Buddy, of the 19th Legion.
Buddy, do you know the terrible fate of your comrades in the 19th?
Yes I do. Gumballhead and I are on our way to Rome to inform the Emperor.
As are we! We shall travel together!
What has become of your horses? surely a senator would have a horse.
We had but one horse, her heart gave out, the poor thing.
sad.

The Teutoburg massacre... we must push on to Rome.
Maybe we should bury this guy first.
Soon...
SO... You know any Roman prayers? That shit was important to 'em
no.
Me neither.
OK... Tomorrow, we'll head to Rome, we'll complete this guys mission and tell the Emperor about the Germans slaughtering three of his legions... it drives him nuts ya know.
Right now, the sunlight, and that horse are dying...
oh... my
I'll get a fire going and scare up a rabbit or two.
a fire is lit, rabbits are eaten...
Good girl.
easy
pretty Girl
HEAVE
is it?
Dead. Yeah.
hm m.
SO, does time travel always suck, or just when I do it?

DETENTION ROOM FUNNIES presents

GUMBALLHEAD the CAT® in Ghosts In ROME part TWO DOG AND WOLF

®© Rob Syers 2008

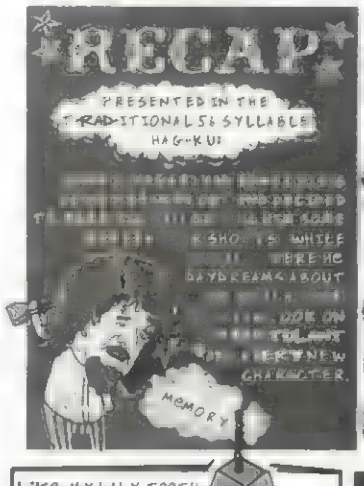
Last time we saw Gumballhead, he was reading the paper in an empty lot. A strange caped cat appeared in a cloud of smoke, and stated that he was from the future, and on an important mission to prevent the assassination of president Johnson. The strange cat then introduced himself as Gumballhead the cat! Our Gumballhead, maybe sensing some weird time paradox bullshit, introduced himself as "Buddy," and told future Gumballhead (who is only from two months ahead in the future) that he had come to the wrong time, and, L.B.J. had never been assassinated! Future Gummy then came up with a new plan. Our Gummy, perhaps protecting his own existence, offered to help. They then traveled back in time to ancient Europe!

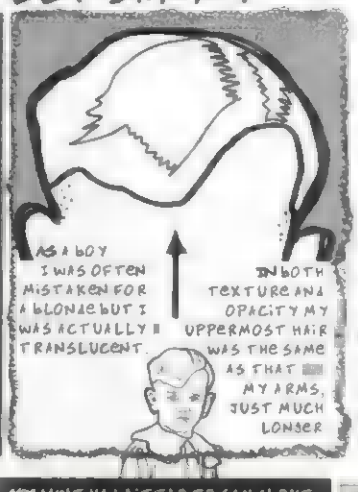
story and art by the Big Guy himself: Rob Syers

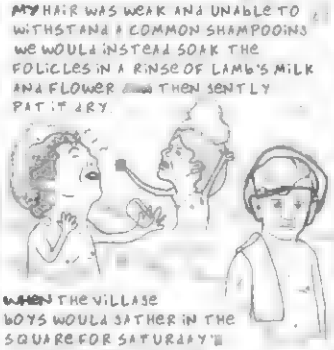
ELEPHANTS DONT LIKE ELEPHANT JOKES
Hey Slim- arent you supposed to run screaming at the sight of a little mousey like me?
hmph. Dont believe everything you hear.
Hey- how do you stop a charging elephant?
well, you-
take away its credit cards
What weighs 4 tons and is bright red?
I dont really care for elephant-
an elephant holding its breath!
Why did the cop pull over the elephant?
I said stop with the-
cause he was trunk'driving
har de har!
Hey-droopy drawers, wait!
What do you call an unwashed pachyderm?
get it?
a smelly phant!)
tough crowd

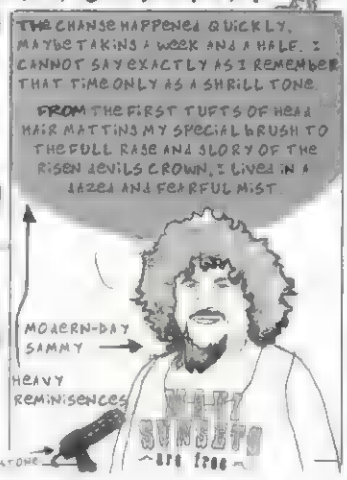
WAY WAY TOTALLY SAMMY : PHOENIX RISING:

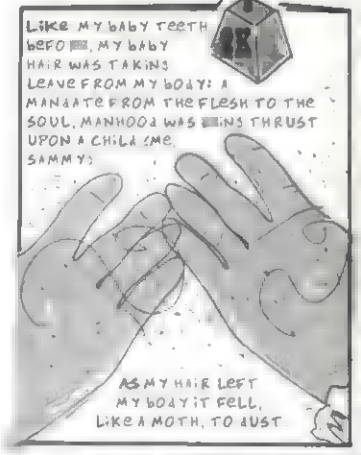
BRAd OEXEMAN

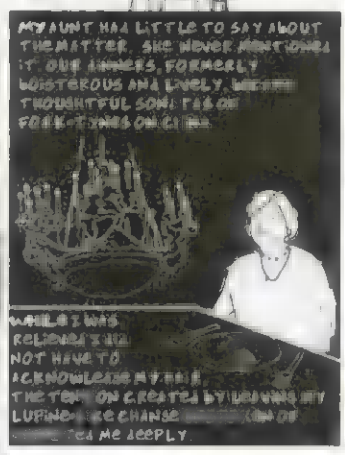


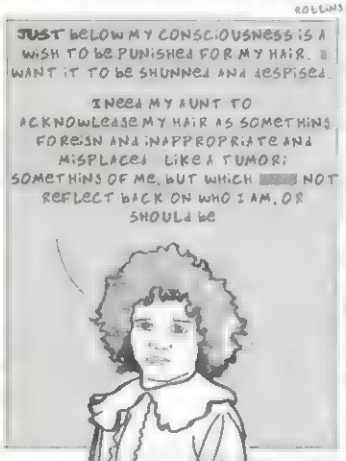


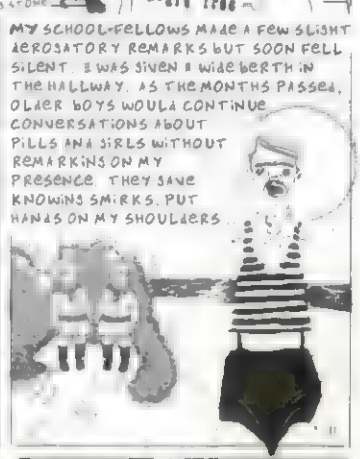


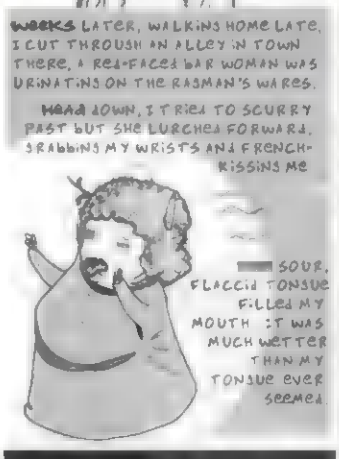


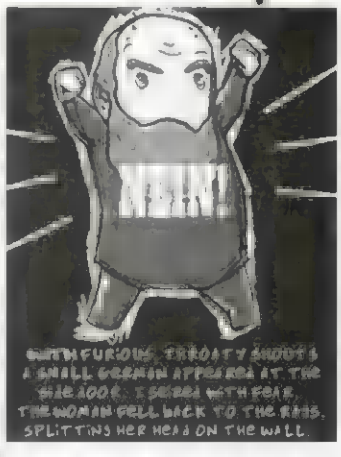


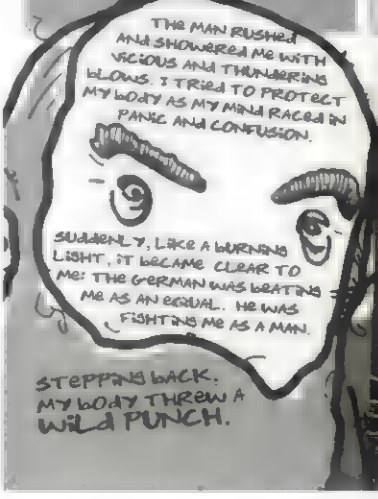


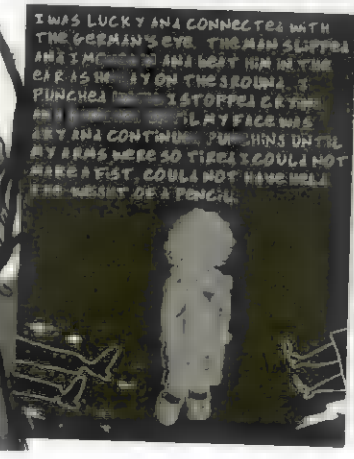


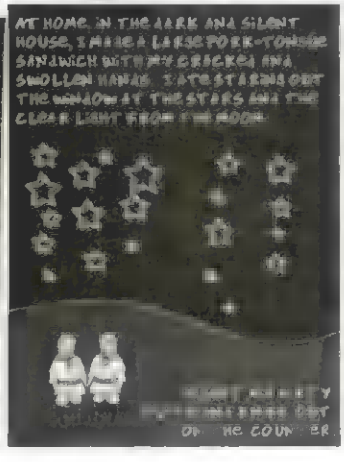












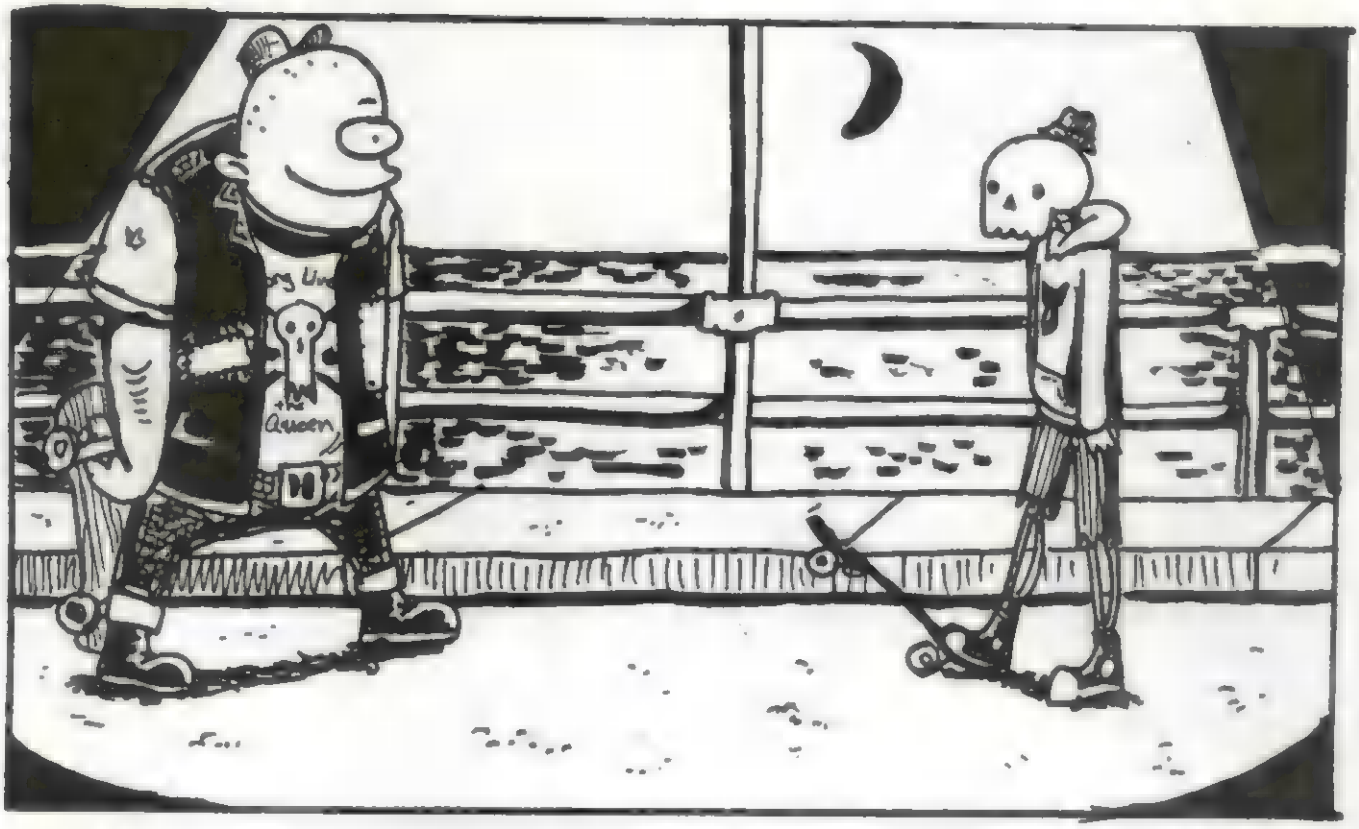
IN THE MORNINS I ROSE LATE FOR SCHOOL. MY AUNT HAD NOT WAKEN ME. I RAN MY BROKEN FINGERS THROUGH MY HAIR; IT WAS THICK AND WIRED SHUT AND WOULD NOT LET MY HAND THROUGH.

DOWNSTAIRS, MY AUNT HAD SILENTLY WASHED MY KNIFE AND PLATE AND RETIRED TO HER ROOM. I WAS ALONE FROM MY WORLD.

TO BE CONTINUED

MEDICINE SHOW

by SLINK MOSS



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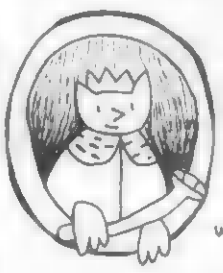
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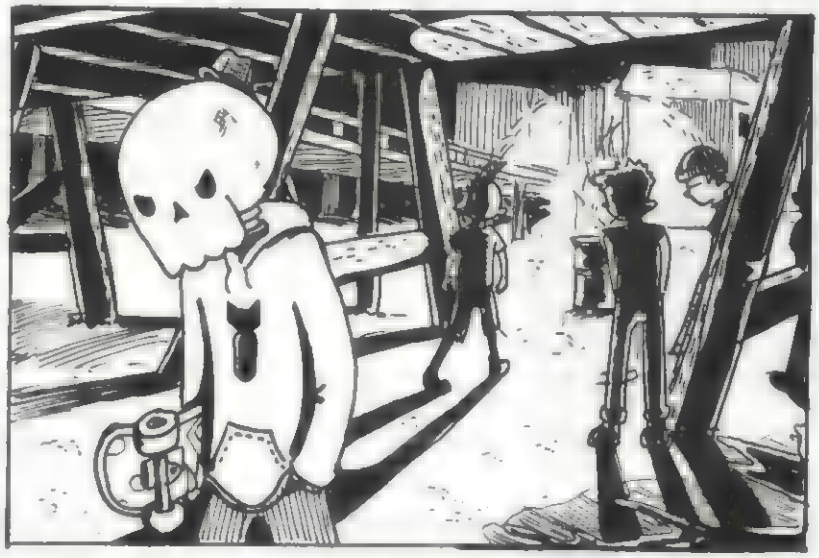
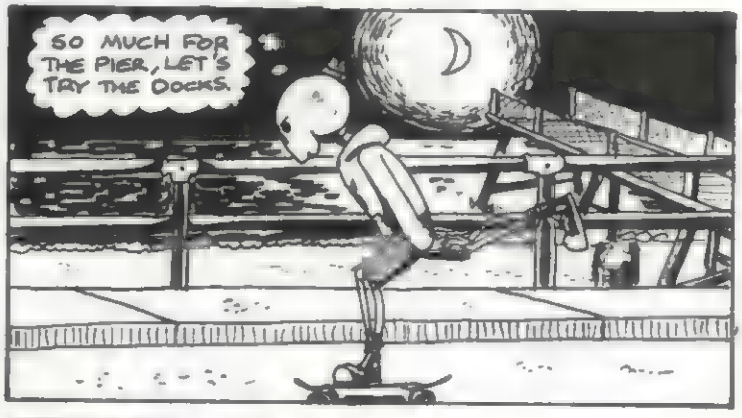
USA

WHO, - WHAT THE @$%@ IS THAT?

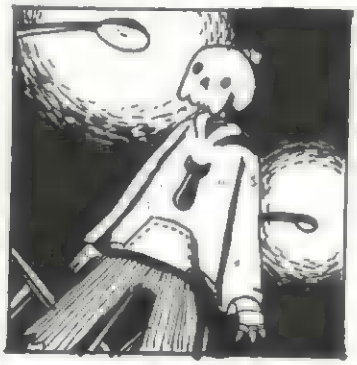
A SKATEBOARDING SKELETON!? WHAT A FREAK!

YAH!
LOSER!
GET LOST!
GO BACK TO THE GRAVEYARD!



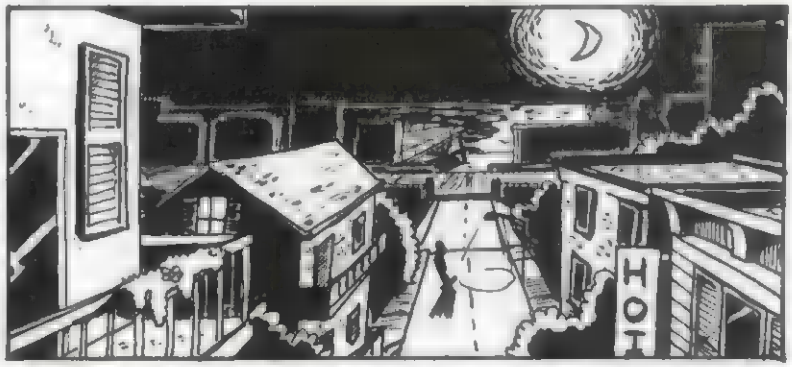

SO MUCH FOR THE PIER, LET'S TRY THE DOCKS.

SKSSHH



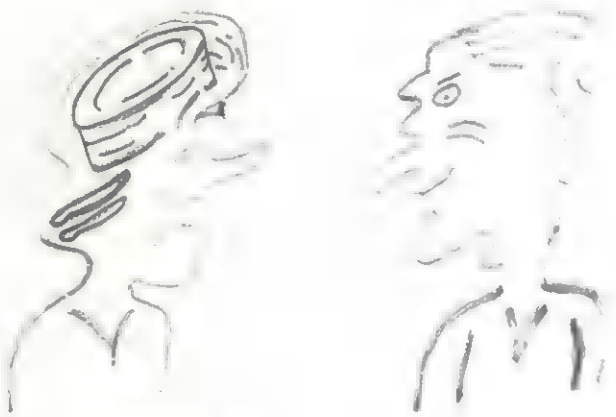
Alton Ellis

ALL THIS LATE NIGHT SKATIN' ISN'T FUN ALL BY YOURSELF...


HOT

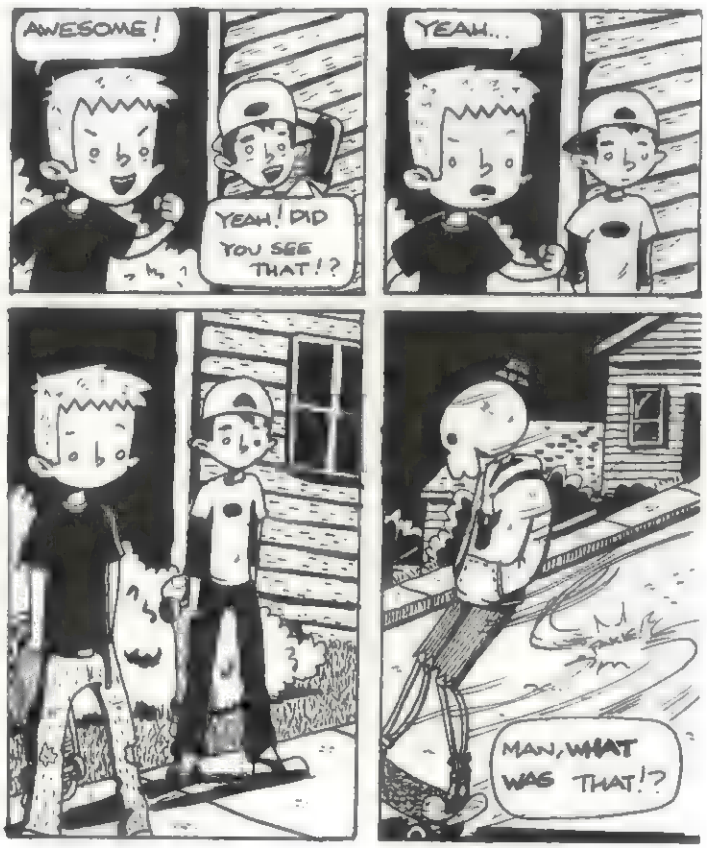
I'LL HEAD TO THE PIER, THERE'S ALWAYS PEOPLE AND GOOD SKATING.

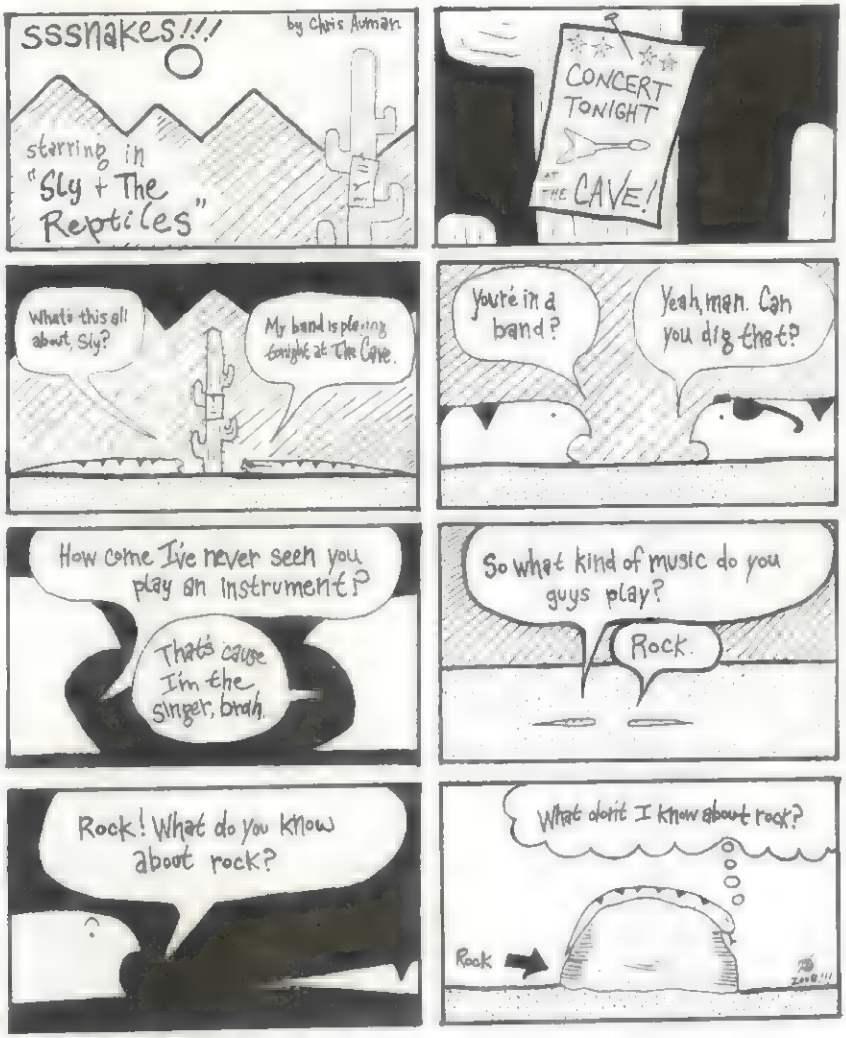
ROCK IS FUNNY by Dan Buck

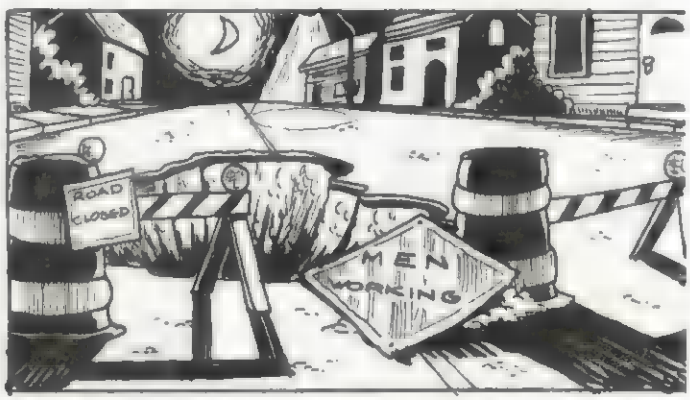


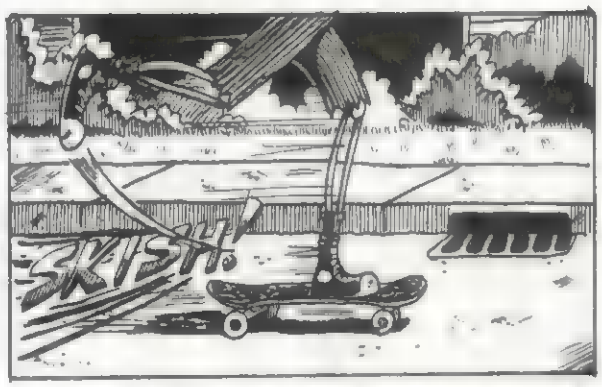
I Used To Be A Musician, Till I Learned How To Play.

Today's Guitars Remind Me Of A Copper Toned Commercial!!!

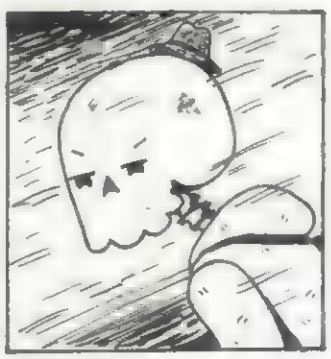



sssnakes!!!
by Chris Auman
starring in "Sly + The Reptiles"
CONCERT TONIGHT AT THE CAVE!
What's this all about, Sly?
My band is playing tonight at The Cave.
You're in a band?
Yeah, man. Can you dig that?
How come I've never seen you play an instrument?
That's cause I'm the singer, brah.
So what kind of music do you guys play?
Rock.
Rock! What do you know about rock?
What don't I know about rock?
Rock


ROAD CLOSED
MEN WORKING


SKISH!

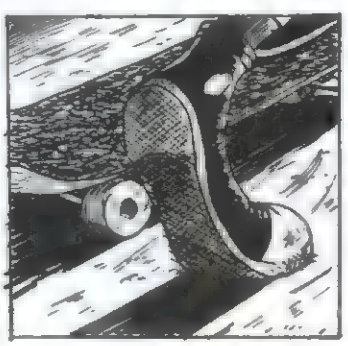
MEN WORKING

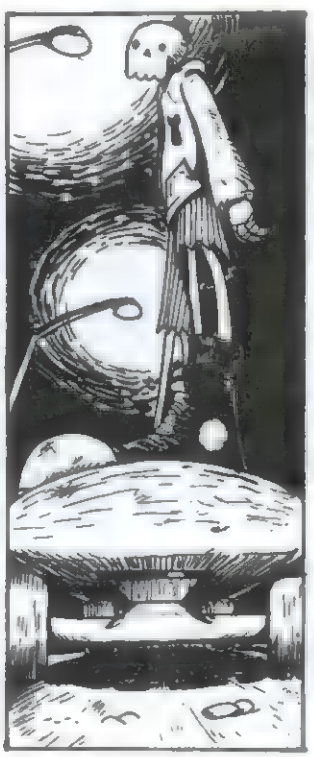


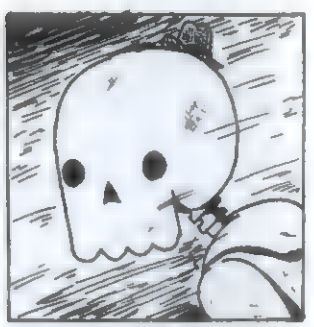
PA-KOP!

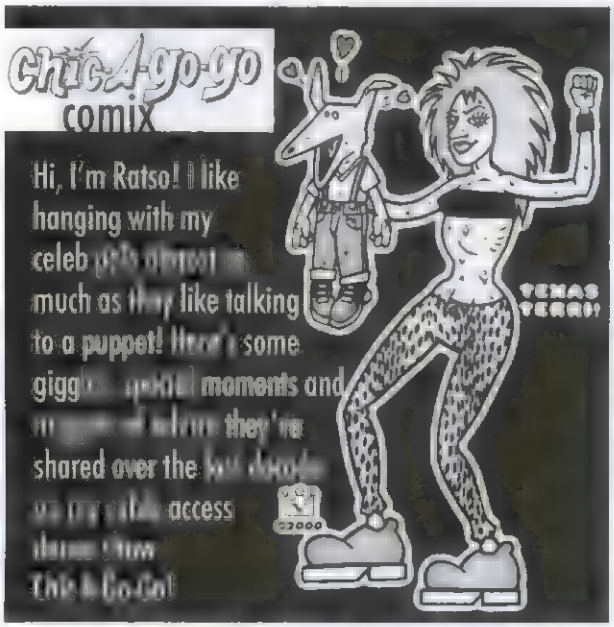
The SHARP Shooters IN: "SOS"

STORY BY MIKE FALOON
"DRAWING" BY FRANK LEONE









Below: Ratso meets the Cramps by King Merinuk/Above: Ratso meets Shonen Knife by Ivan Brunetti

LIZA

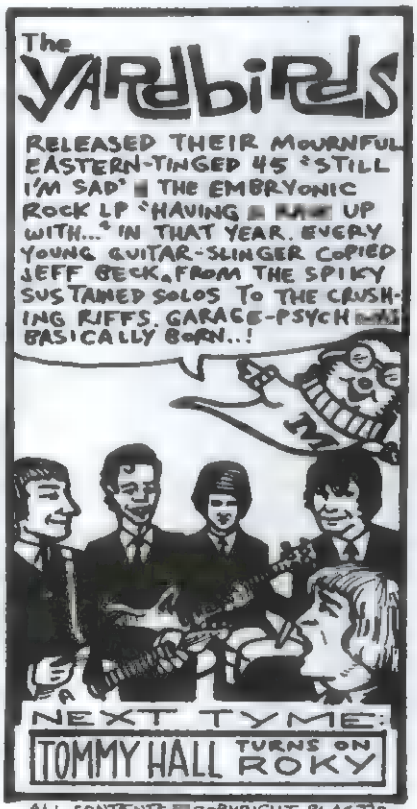
NEVER SPOKE TO ANYONE, ALWAYS LOOKED LIKE SHE WAS ABOUT TO FALL OVER. ONCE SET AN EX-BOYFRIEND'S HOUSE ON FIRE.

CINDY

ART SCHOOL DROP-OUT, LIVED WITH A TRANSVECTITE PHONE SEX "ACTOR". TOLD ME EVERY DETAIL OF HER SEXUAL ENCOUNTERS.

SHANA

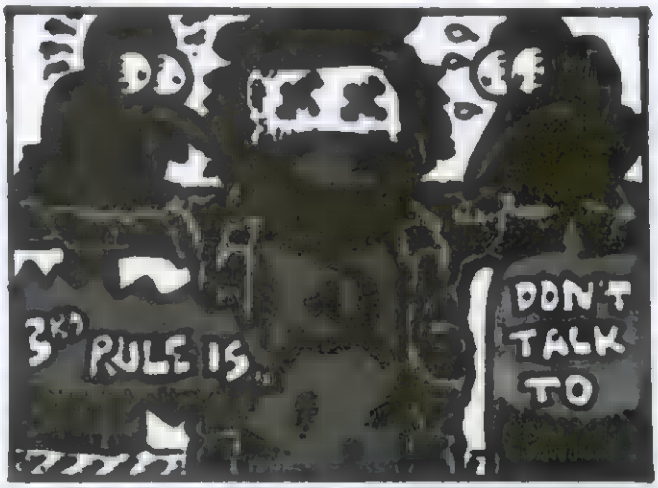
MADE HER OWN CLOTHES OUT OF BURLAP AND CHICKEN WIRE.. LIKE MAD MAX MEETS 'DEXY'S MIDNIGHT RUNNERS".

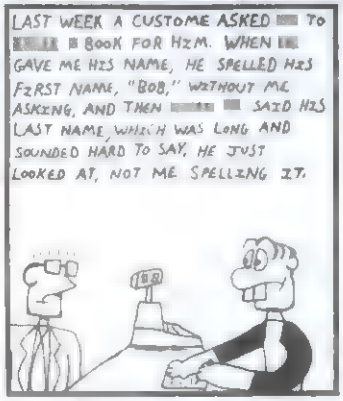


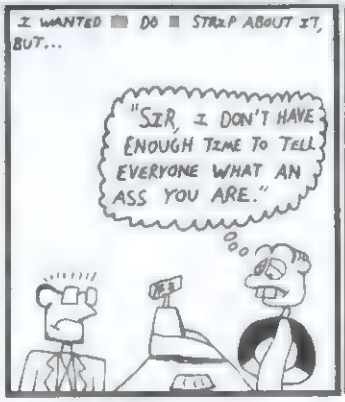
ALL CONTENTS [redacted] COPYRIGHT PLASTIC CRIMEWAVE 2008

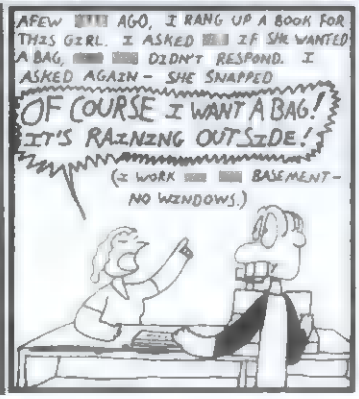
1,2,3,4 FUNNIES

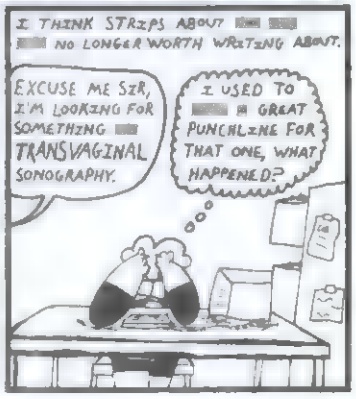
BY MR. SEAN & THE RAMONES

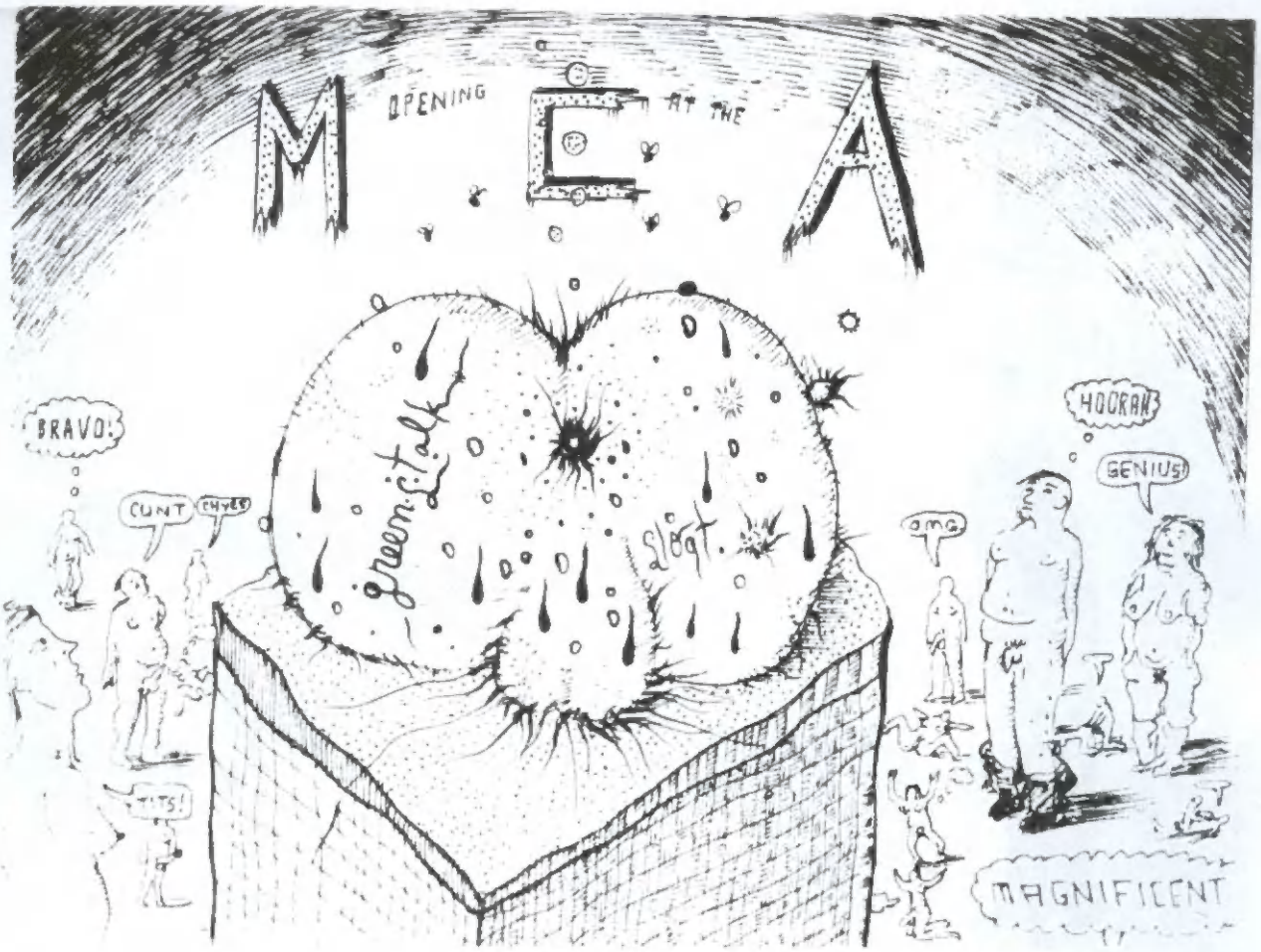


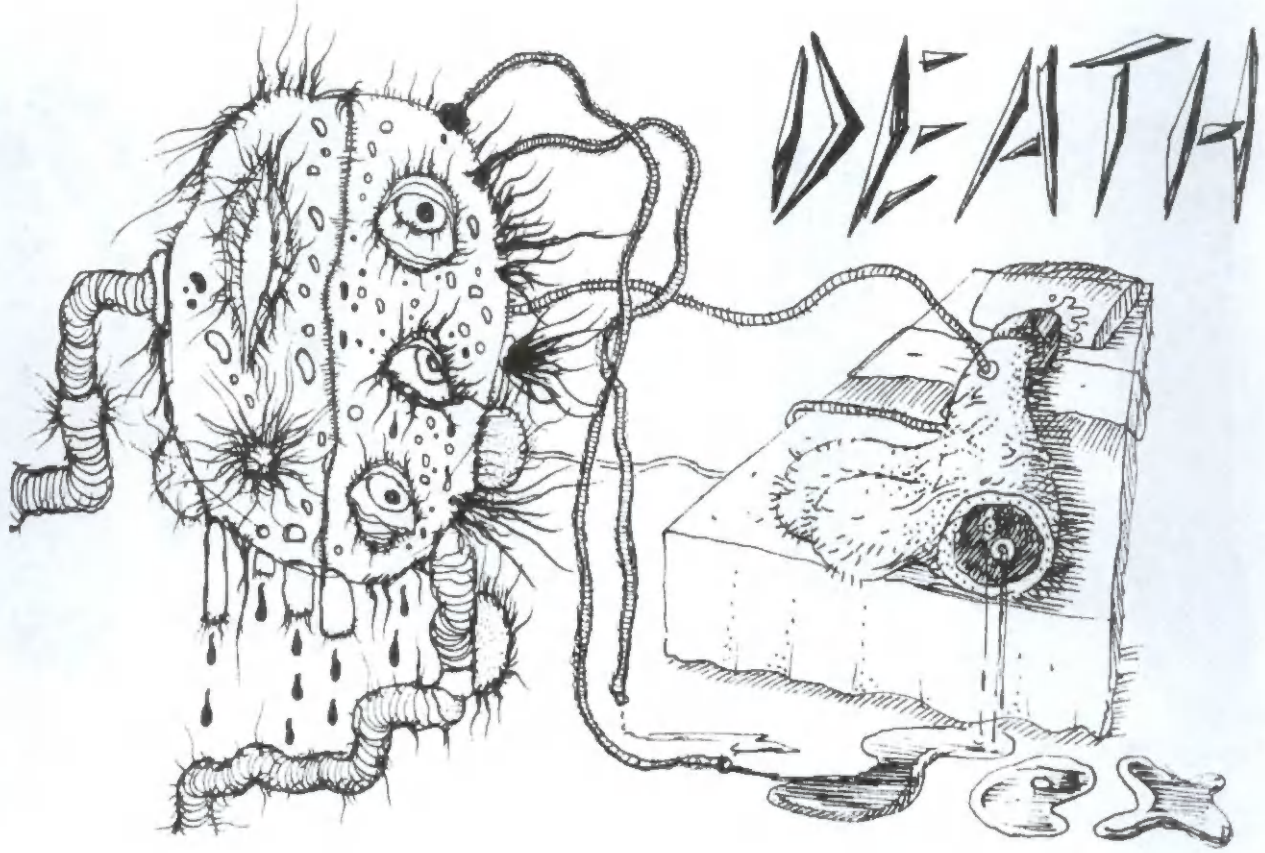








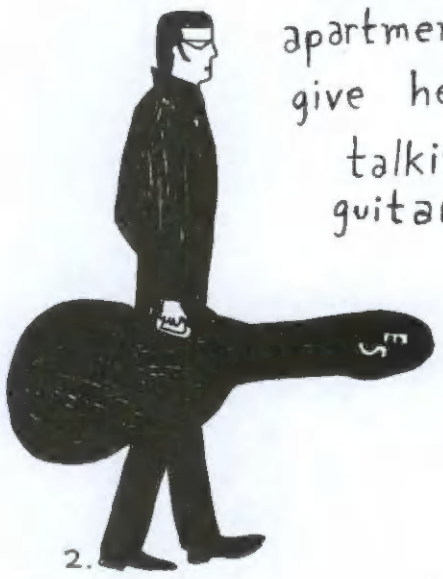

M E A
OPENING AT THE
BRAVO!
CUNT
CHYES
TITS!
green stalk
sloat
OMG
HOORAH
GENIUS!
MAGNIFICENT

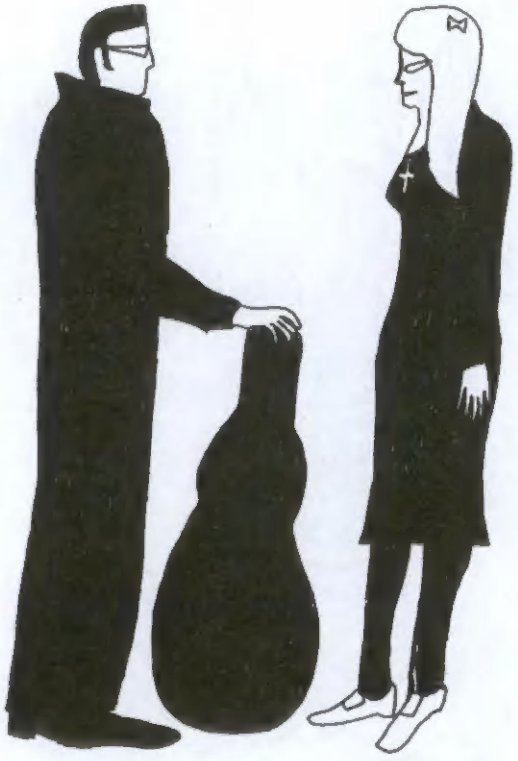

DEATH

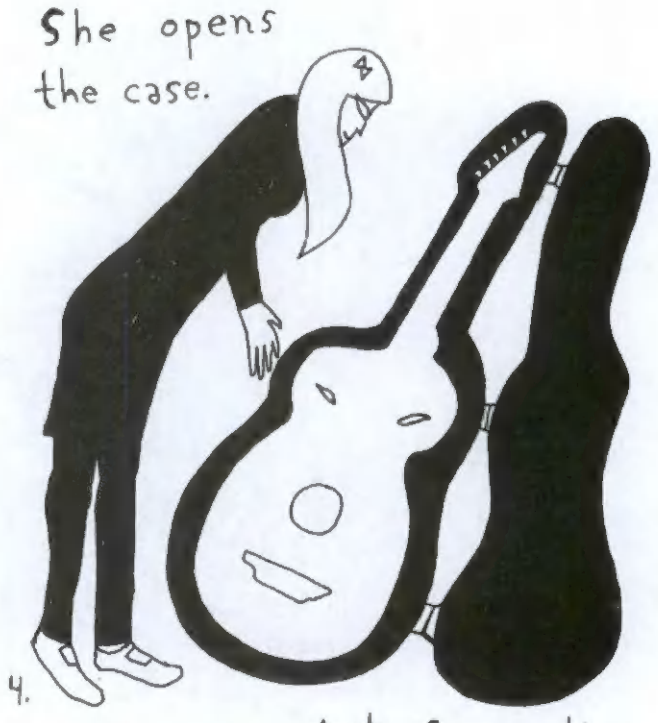
Vol. 4 No. 2

SUNK MOSS

THE ROCKIN' ACE





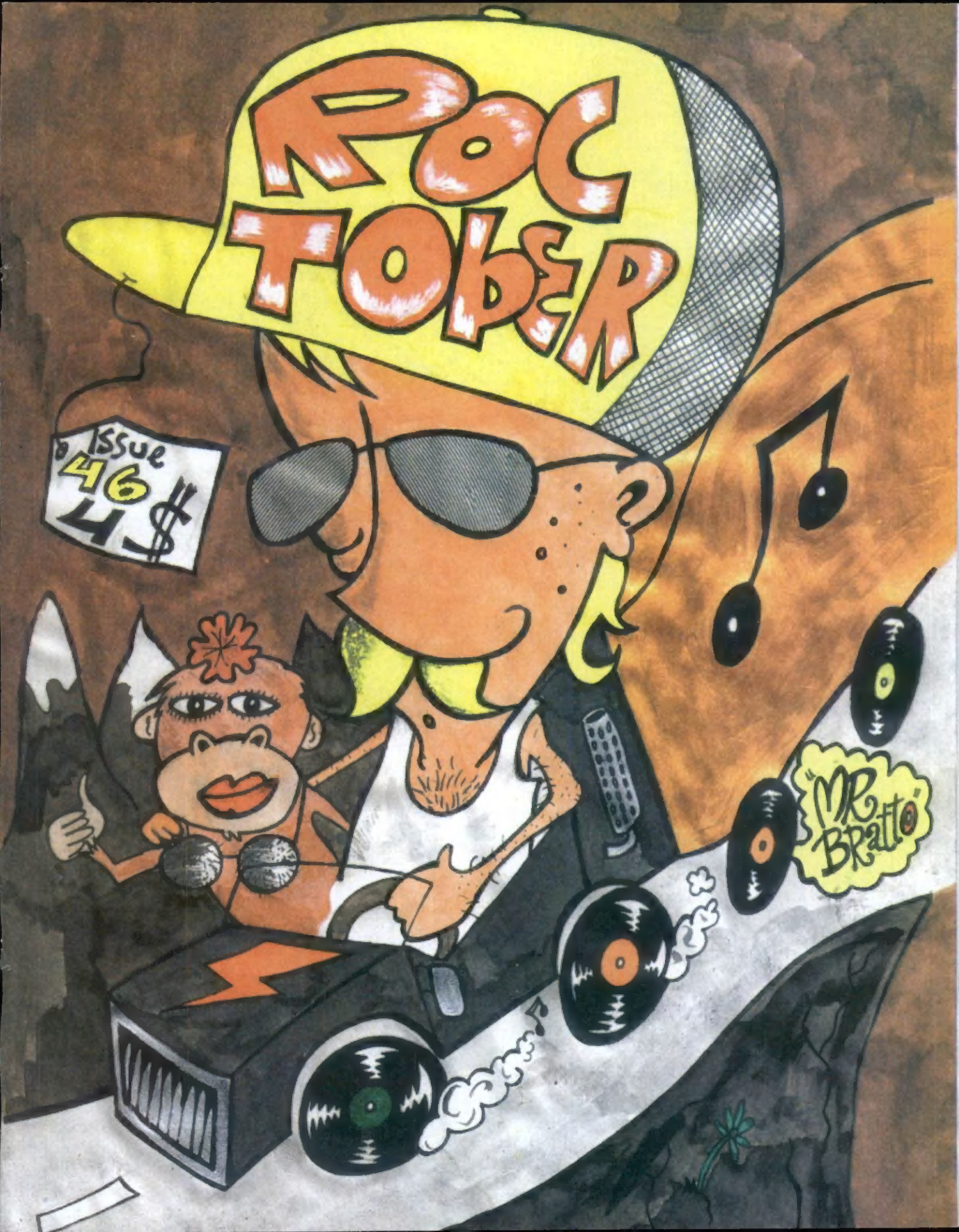


Next: Conversation

David Lee Roth Dream

BY JOHN PORCELLINO

DREAMT SUMMER 2007 · DRAWN 5/29/08 by John P.
APOLOGIES and LOVE TO DAVID LEE ROTH


ROC TOBER
Issue 46
4 $
MR BRATT